

Romans 2:1-4

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[0 : 00] Romans 2 and verses 1 to 4. Romans 2 and 1 to 4. In these verses there are two deadly symptoms.

! Two deadly symptoms of a terrible spiritual disease.! Symptom number one is a spirit of superiority. The apostle envisages that as people heard Romans 1, which speaks generally of the kind of non-Jewish, the Gentile world, as it speaks of the nations outside of the people of God, it speaks to them in that general sense.

And Paul imagines that as people listen to that great catalogue of sins that were outlined at the end of chapter 1, that as they listen to them and then look around them and say, well, we're not guilty of them.

There's a general air of superiority. superiority, we're all right. They think those that are guilty of those sins, they deserve the curse of God.

They deserve the wrath of God, the judgment of God. But they sit in their little corner like little Jack Horner and they say, what a good boy am I? It's very clear there's an air of superiority.

[1 : 20] Think of another famous quote from Luke 18, where the upright religious man goes to pray and he says, I thank you, Lord, that I'm not like other men.

And then I think you've got a bit of a clue at what Romans 2 is getting at. It's a spiritual cancer. The symptom is an air of superiority.

I'm not guilty of those things. I'm not guilty of those sins out there. I'm above all that. And symptom number two is a spirit of impunity.

Of impunity. That means this, that when they heard these words, that they thought the judgment of God will never fall on us. No wrath of God will ever come against us.

They thought that they would escape without any work of God taking place in their heart, without any turning to God, without any need for God's mercy and God's kindness, without acknowledging at any point their sin.

[2 : 27] They had an air of impunity. We'll get away with it. Those are the two symptoms. Superiority. Looking down on others and thinking, oh, what vile sinners they are.

And then impunity. The judgment of God. It's not going to come on us. We're not in the same danger as them. And of course, the disease that they are symptoms of is the cancer of hypocrisy. And that is what he addresses in these words. And he addresses it in his day to the Jews. Because they suffered from this to a high degree.

And so the apostle speaks to them. And he goes on to name them specifically in chapter 2. He begins in a very general sense, saying watch out for this. And we all ought to take heed to what God is saying to us in his word.

And particularly this section of Romans. The Jews had been brought up, hadn't they? They had the word of God. They'd received the special privilege of the voice of God in their midst.

[3 : 36] They'd had a vision of God. The Jews had known the instruction of God. The Jews held on to the covenant of God, of the mercies of God being manifest to them and revealed to them again and again and again that he had the promises of God.

They knew more about God than those who did not have the word of God. That's obvious. And so here's the great contrast that is being set out.

Romans chapter 1 is speaking of those who know God in a general sense. And everybody does. Everyone who's ever lived knows that.

And they suppress that truth. But now Paul turns his attention to those who've grown up living their lives in and out of the people of God. Who've lived their lives in and out of the worship of God.

Who've grown up under the sound of the word of God. Who don't merely know God in a general sense, but they know God's gracious gifts to them. They know God in a special sense, in a specific sense, in that God has bound himself to them and revealed himself to them.

[4 : 54] And so the Jews knew much more of God and who he was and what he was like than the Gentiles did. And they knew much more of their human nature.

They knew more of what they were like. Than the non-Jews did. God had revealed that to them. They knew what it was to sin against God in a way that the non-Jews didn't. They knew more of the nature of what it was to be saved by God. And the Gentiles didn't know that. They knew of a coming Messiah, that God had made promises.

And the Gentiles didn't know that. And it's in the light of all of those things that the apostle then turns to them and accuses them of hypocrisy. And so we must stand, mustn't we, this morning under the sound of the word of God and hear very carefully what it says.

That it is possible to have the privilege of the sound of the gospel and yet be a hypocrite. So Paul is preaching his knee on the gospel of God concerning the son of God.

[6 : 04] He's spoken of the righteousness of God, the very thing that God is and that is what God requires of us and we don't have it. And then he speaks about the seriousness of that unrighteousness.

There's that long passage showing the Gentiles, all of the world, knew this general knowledge of God that they suppress. They exchange the truth of God, the worship of God for a lie.

And they exchange the human relationships for things that are twisted and perverse. And so in Romans 1, Paul is telling you now this is what unrighteousness looks like. And then he turns to those who've been saturated by the word of God.

And he says, you, you, also suffer from unrighteousness. And it's why you and I need to listen. Because you and I, it's easy to suffer from this same sin. A sin which is so serious that it calls for the righteous judgment of God. So let's beware of an air of superiority.

[7 : 16] That we look around us at the world and say, well, I'm not like them. When in fact, you and I may be exactly like them. And beware of a spirit of impunity that says, well, we're alright because we're members of the church.

But is Christ in your heart? And has Christ brought you to repentance? And is there ongoing repentance turning to God? Jack Miller's got a nice little book on repentance.

He makes two points. He says this, there are many who call Jesus their saviour and they are loaded down with pretense and evasion. And they've no heart for confessing and forsaking their ways as God commands them.

That's entirely the point that Paul's making in Romans chapter 2. He turns to people who've been saturated with the word of God and he charges them with pretense and evasion. And so often that's the way it is.

that those of us who have been surrounded with gospel words find it difficult to repent. And then Miller makes a second point.

[8 : 28] He says, many others have an awareness of their guilt but do not know how to go to Christ and rid themselves of their dark blots. In their secret heart, God is viewed as an unsympathetic tyrant, not as the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

I think Miller hits the nail on the head. This passage we're looking at, it exposes our tendency to pretense and evasion. But it also exposes our lack of looking to Christ.

And that's the key. When you hear the Apostle Paul in Romans 2, we should tremble. When we realize what he's saying, who are you that judges others?

Do you think that you too will escape the judgment of God? And we hear that and it exposes our guilt. But he doesn't stop there. In verse 4, he points us to Jesus and he says, do you know that kindness of God, it's meant to lead you to repentance?

Do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? So he takes us, doesn't he, from exposure of pretense and evasion? And then he takes us and exposes us to Christ and him crucified, the rich, deep, flowing mercy of God that comes to you through Jesus.

[9 : 53] And so we need to hear, don't we, what the Holy Spirit is saying to us today. And he speaks to you and I very clearly about the judgment of God. And then he bursts into praise about the kindness of God and the long-suffering-ness of God and God's patience and that will lead us to repentance.

Somebody has said this, do not attempt to confess or forsake your old ways apart from the love of God manifested in a crucified Lord. The mercy of God, the judgment of God, the wrath of God, the righteousness of God, it's taking us all the way back, isn't it, right to the start of the gospel.

So three points. First of all, as we try to apply this, I want to exhort you to pray to God that he would show you your own sin.

Pray to God to show you your own sin. That's what the Lord Jesus speaks about, isn't it? This is not new. The Lord Jesus speaks about this in Matthew chapter 7.

You know that great, funny way you're putting it that Jesus has, isn't it? Judge not and be not judged for with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged and with the measure you use it will be measured to you.

[11:10] Why do you see the little speck that is in your brother's eye but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother let me take the speck out of your eye when there is a log in your own eye?

That's exactly what Paul is saying in Romans chapter 2. It's exactly what the Jews of his day needed to hear. And he will go on in this letter to passionately address them.

He'll speak of his deep desire, his yearning before God that they be converted, that they come to Jesus Christ. But he's accusing them of pretending and evading in the sight of God.

And he's saying to them exactly what Jesus did. He says take the log out of your eye. And that's what we need to hear every one of us. Chapter 2 of Romans 1 verse 1 of Romans chapter 2 speaks of those who condemn others and are blind to the fact that they are guilty of the very same sins.

What does he mean by that? Remember when you come to Romans there's no chapter divisions when it was originally written. And so immediately you go back to verse 32.

[12:27] What does he mean by condemning other people? For doing this you do the very same thing. What do they do in verse 32?

It says though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die not only do they do them but they give approval to those who practice them.

So in other words at the end of Romans 1 Paul is speaking about all people the Gentiles and their approving of sin. And Paul says to the Jewish people he says here are you you know the written word of God and yet you do the very same thing.

you approve of certain sins. What sins? What can you be speaking of? Well let's go back to verse 29. There's 21 sins there.

Look at verse 29 they were filled with all manner of unrighteousness evil covetousness malice they're full of envy murder strife deceit maliciousness they're gossip slanderous haters of God insolent haughty boastful inventors of evil disobedient to parents foolish faithless heartless ruthless and so at the start of chapter 2 he says you are condemning them for all these things and yet you are guilty of the very same things you're full of gossip and slander you're guilty too of being disobedient to parents you are guilty of being haters of God how are the Jews how are they guilty of that go back further where did it start he says by their unrighteousness they suppressed the truth they were suppressing the truth in a general sense of what God has revealed of himself but now Paul says to them at some chapter 2 you are condemning them for for suppressing what can be known of God in a general sense but you know God in a special way

[14:37] God has sent Jesus Christ to you in fulfilment of the written word that he's spoken to you here were the Jews sitting smugly saying to themselves well we don't exchange the worship of God for a lie and Paul is saying what he's saying it's the very thing you've done for you have murdered Jesus Christ you say that you are not haters of God but you've exchanged the worship of God through Christ for something that is a lie what are you doing you've got these lambs you've got these bulls you've got the temple and an altar but here is Jesus Christ and so can you see you are more guilty guilty to a greater degree than the Gentiles are that's that's the point he's making he's saying this that every refusal to worship the Lord Jesus Christ every refusal to seek peace with

God through the Lord Jesus Christ every refusal to believe in the Lord Jesus Christ to run to the Lord Jesus Christ to rest in the Lord Jesus Christ every refusal to do that is a wicked and evil thing it is a crime out of all proportion in comparison to the Gentile sin to refuse to embrace the Lord Jesus to refuse to let go of everything else that you hold on to spiritually thinking oh well this is impressive spiritually refusing to let go of it and cling to Christ to refuse to come naked to refuse to come admitting that you are covered in a spiritual disease you see that's the problem the Jews would not admit that they were covered in a spiritual disease Isaiah the Old Testament prophet he speaks to

them and he says you are covered from head to foot in sores
King James version spoke of putrefying wounds and they think that's the Gentiles and as they come to God they don't think they're like that they don't think that they're defiled covered in spiritual disease but God is saying to them no actually your disease is far far worse you see this the privilege of knowing the gospel can lead you to a terrible form of a disease the disease of hypocrisy and so you and I as the people of God we need to pray to God please show me my sin please expose my sin that I may run from it to Christ so the second point is this pray for God in his mercy that he will help you acknowledge his righteous judgment that he will help you to acknowledge God's righteous judgment pray that he'll show you your sin pray that he'll help you to acknowledge God's righteous judgment because a hypocrite will not do that a hypocrite will not acknowledge God and his righteous judgments what will a hypocrite do he will avoid acknowledging that God is righteous by thinking angry thoughts or self pitying thoughts a hypocrite will think this is not the way that you are supposed to be God how dare you behave like this God or the hypocrite will think self pitying thoughts this is not fair God why are you treating me like this God I don't deserve this I don't deserve any of these sorrows I don't deserve any of these trials I don't deserve these burdens that come from your hand and that is exactly what the prophets had said to the people of Israel over and over and over again let me give you just a few examples of how they refused to acknowledge that God was right in his judgments Jeremiah 5 verse 10 he says this go up through her vine rows and destroy you but make not a full end strip away her branches for they are not the Lord's for the house of Israel and the house of Judah have been utterly treacherous to me declares the Lord they've spoken falsely of the Lord and said here's the point they've spoken falsely of the Lord and have said he will do nothing no disaster will come upon us nor shall we see sword or famine and he accuses them of despising God they've been treacherous and those are the same words that Paul uses in chapter 2 and verse 4 when he says do you presume on God do you despise the riches of God's mercy and so here were
[19 : 55] Israel the people of God under Jeremiah's prophecy saying to themselves God won't do anything to us none of these sorrows that are happening to us are coming from his displeasure with us or you go to Isaiah 26 verse 10 and 11 and God sends again his prophet to expose this to the people he says you won't accept my righteous judgments if favor is shown to the wicked he does not learn righteousness in the land of uprightness he deals corruptly and does not see the majesty of the Lord oh Lord your hand is lifted up but they do not see it and that's what Isaiah says again and again Isaiah 1 he begins God's hand is against them but they don't see it and they argue our way is hidden from the Lord no look carefully why is the righteous judgment of God in his discipline falling on his people it's because they've turned away and they've acted treacherously towards the Lord and I think that's significant it's significant that the apostle Paul in Romans goes on to quote from Isaiah again and again and again because he's picking up this rich biblical theme and he's saying to God's people what always needs to be said to God's people in every!
what's he saying in Romans 2? Will you pass judgment on others and do you think you will escape? Don't you know he says to them that the judgment of God rightly falls or is according to truth against those who do such things?
Do you think oh man or woman that you will escape the judgment of God? he's saying to them three things on this judgment he's saying that the judgment of God will come on every unrepentant impenitent sinner every sinner who does not turn from their sin and turn to the Lord Jesus Christ for mercy God's judgment will fall upon him he's saying secondly will fall rightly or according to truth in other words God will act as a judge and he'll act in a way that is right and correct and perfect and upright in accordance with his character in accordance with his knowledge of what's been said and what's been done and the third thing about this righteous judgment is that no one will escape all sinners who do not repent of their sin will be judged!
in truth and no so he says to those who sit within the community of God and those who know the word of God those who have received the sacraments of God those who talk and sing about the gospel of God and yet you have no heart for God because you've not repented of your sin you will not escape you will not escape my righteous judgment children you know you play hide and seek sometimes isn't it and when you play hide and seek sometimes you think I'm going to hide in the most obvious place do you ever do that you know when you're in the park and you're playing that game with the tree and kind of hide and seek and somebody's by a tree and they're counting and

you hide on the other side of the tree and you think they'll never and sometimes we can do that with [23 : 49] God we think you know what you'll never find me here we think God will he'll not realise that I've never trusted the Lord Jesus Christ and in fact I want nothing to do with the Lord Jesus Christ so I'll hide in church and this passage says to you and I he'll find you no one will escape so boys and girls I plead with you don't hide in thinking that being here is just enough because it's not if you've not repented of your sin and if you have no heart for God you will face God's judgment you say well I've been baptized I come to church if you have not repented and turned to the Lord Jesus Christ you will not escape God's judgment and so we pray don't we we pray

God show me my sin and we pray God help me to acknowledge your righteous judgment and then thirdly we pray God in your mercy lead me to repentance and pray and pray that God would give you that gift of repentance and so this passage tells us doesn't it so much what the hypocrite is like and it tells us so much what the hypocrite will face but the amazing thing is it tells you much more about God do you remember Romans is a book about God and verse four is like one of these treasures that you stumble into it's one of these treasures of the grace of God he asked do you presume do you treat treacherously on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance words that search us and cut us really deeply about hypocrisy and words about judgment that we don't like to hear and suddenly the apostle bursts into praise about who

God is and he sings to you of God's mercy and his kindness and his richness and his depths of mercy and his forbearance he speaks of God being lavish and lavishing things on men and women and boys and girls he speaks of his kindness and his patience and his forbearance as being rich and vast and deep and powerful there are no!

quantities in God's character thanks be to God we need don't we vast quantities of riches and grace and mercy and these vast quantities are supplied for the depth of our sin and so there's no depth of our sin that you can reach that puts you out of reach of the mercy of God that God cannot wash you thoroughly from and cleanse you completely from he speaks of them as lavish he speaks of them specifically the mercy of God is the kindness of God and the kindness of God is his goodness and God is good and God has a heart that is full a heart that yearns that longs for the salvation of sinners the Bible says God takes no pleasure in the death of the wicked though he brings his righteousness to bear and when it speaks of the tolerance of

God and the forbearance of God it means that he has depths of holding back depths of holding back and waiting specifically the word is the word means for adopting a truce for a long time God adopts a truce not yet not yet my judgment will not come yet I will not pour out my wrath upon them yet I will wait and that's what his patience means he waits for a long long time and we need to understand that truce does not mean peace that's what the Jews of Romans 2 were mistaking weren't they everything is alright of my life I'm part of a nation I'm part of the community I've got the badges I've been circumcised that is how

[28 : 41] God will treat me he's going to treat us as a community and I'm right there in the community and here is God saying no I will judge each one and he makes that very clear as the passage goes on and Paul goes on and he says why are you treating these things as worthless why do you treat the lavish goodness of God as if it's nothing why should you treat the long suffering of God declaring that truth as if it's worthless why should you treat the patience of God as he puts up for a long long time with your pretense and evasion and you're not bringing your heart to him in its ugly diseased state and saying Lord please mend it how can you treat that like it's nothing and God is rich in mercy and kindness and patience and tolerance and forbearance and look what he says he says this is designed to bring you to repentance

God's patience is not designed to make you think that everything is okay between you and God it's not designed to enable you to stand up and pray let the Pharisee I thank you that I'm not like other people but so that you I too am a sinner in fact I'm the chief of sinners and whatever this man or this woman or this boy or this girl has done I too am a sinner and I'm guilty far worse and that mercy of God is designed to bring you to Jesus you see repentance is not simply caring about the magnitude of your sin true repentance is when you see the magnitude of your sin but you come to see the greater magnitude of the mercy of

God in Jesus it's the kindness of God that leads you to repentance there's a beautiful phrase in the Westminster Confession of Faith when it talks about repentance it says this we apprehend that there is mercy in Christ that's what repentance is we apprehend that there is mercy in Christ it's

saying what what a sinner am I what can be done for me the mercy of God that is what can be done for me that comes to me in Christ the sacrifice of Christ himself upon the cross that is what can be done to me the judgment of God that should have fallen on me has fallen on him and so I repent and turn away from myself and the horrible things that I do and I run to him oh God be merciful to me it's the mercy of

God that leads you repentance that leads you to throw yourself wholly at the feet of Jesus and says have mercy on me and it's the Holy Spirit that as he exposes our sin and as he shows us the magnitude of sin in my heart and your heart that at that point we turn and we look at the wounds on Christ's hands and on his feet and his side and it is there that we apprehend that it is in him and him alone that we will find life and nowhere else and true repentance has you looking away from yourself to him and too many of us aren't we are stuck looking at our sin and we look now to Jesus and that shall reform our lives and that shall reform our church and that shall energise our spiritual beings to worship him as we come to Christ let's pray and to to! to to to to