

Saul2Paul

ROMANS

A BLOGPOST FROM THE APOSTLE PAUL TO THE CHURCH IN THE USA

Saul2PaulBlog

September 28, 2017

Hi there Church in the USA! Gave you quite a lot to chew on in last week's blog, and I have some more to talk to you about! Why? Because I love God and I love you! I don't want to see you guys go down the wrong path, and we need to deal with judgement and guilt. Like now!

You know where we left off: God decided to let us "do our own thing" and we dug quite a hole. You say: "But dude, I didn't do those bad things – it has nothing to do with me!" Oh, you think you have never judged? You think you have never dissed God? Well, let's see about that. Read on:

Mom in a grocery store with a noisy kid so she yells at him to be quiet – she is loud and maybe doesn't use the best language. You judge her for not keeping her temper in check while disciplining her kid. Ok. You have a point. Then you get in your car and head to work. Traffic is a bear. You are minding your own business and this idiot cuts you off, you slam on your breaks – jeeze! You yell at him, not using the best language. It's hard to keep your temper in check when an idiot cuts you off, isn't it? Hmm...One small example, but I am warning all of you – **be careful about judging**, we all do things that get judged.

We deserve condemnation from God, but what does He give us? Abundance of kindness, forbearance, and patience. And forgiveness through His Son. What does God deserve from us? Or let me ask it a different way: Do we give God what He deserves? We choose the corporal and temporal "rewards" of the world over the substantive blessings from God? Why? They are quick and easy and don't require obedience. We'll cry later, but for now, we feel dang good.

Spoiler alert: the church leader (we'll call him Bob) is quick to tell people how great he is. Bob does all kinds of stuff for the church, has a great job with status and give away bunches of money. What a guy! Yay Bob. Bob is really good at confessing other people's sins – **we call that judging** – but he looks down on poor people (they just don't work hard enough), and meek people, like the widow who takes church attendance (we'll call her Sue). Bob is always telling Sue to stop using that ridiculous little pad of paper and scrubby pencil. And for crying out loud, it takes her forever to do the attendance. Can Sue just speed it up a little; people keep seeing her hobble around counting heads. It's embarrassing.

Bob feels really good about how smart he is and how capable he is. Sue feels badly about Bob's jibes, but her sight isn't so good anymore and sometimes it's hard for her to write. Guess what God sees?

Sue doesn't just count heads, she quietly prays for each one as she marks them down. She loves them all. The folks who just visited a couple of times, the babies, and the adults she knew as children, and Bob. In God's eyes Sue is one of His warriors who gives Him everything she has and is. Bob is a jerk who doesn't give anyone the grace God gave him. His actions separate him from God. He might redeem himself if Sue keeps praying for him...

Yeah, this is tough stuff to get through, but **so important!** I don't want you to just read the Word of God; I want you to feel it, know it, and take hold of it. Remember when you were a kid and your mom kept telling you (over and over again), to look before you cross the street? You **heard** her, but you didn't **do** what she said. One day you started crossing without thinking and HONK!!! SCREECH!! You almost get hit by an SUV! Whew! Just missed you. That "look before your cross" rule? Now you know it, feel it, and you'll do it!

Back to Bob and Sue: Bob reads the Bible, can rattle off a bunch of verses, and is role-model. He obeys the law, doesn't drink, smoke, do drugs or cheat on his wife. Lots of guys wish they could be a leader like Bob. He can tell you all the rules about attending church: where to sit, what to pray, and how to act. Maybe the church could write a hymn for him: "*Go with Bob.*"

Sue...poor Sue. Can barely rub two pennies together. Her clothes are worn. She didn't have a great education, and sometimes sounds a little slow. She lives alone, and is so happy to take attendance at church on Sunday's. It's her only family, and she is so grateful for everyone there. She knows in her heart how good God is. So she prays. She prays a lot. For everyone. She wants them to feel as close to God as she does. Before she knew the Bible, she knew God. He has always been there. Been everywhere.

Think about it:

Law. Condemnation, Judgement and Punishment. Scary. Do you really want to live under that? Bob does. Love. Conviction. Forgiveness. Grace. Don't you want to be wrapped up in that? Sue does.

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CHAPTER 2

CREATION AND CONSCIENCE

READ ROMANS CHAPTER 2: NOT BY HERITAGE, NOT BY RITES

WORDS TO PONDER:

Judgement: An opinion or conclusion. A decision of a court or judge; an obligation created by the decree of a court. A divine sentence or decision [by God]

Law: A binding custom or practice; a rule of conduct or action prescribed and formally recognized as binding, enforced by a controlling authority. The revelation of the will of God set forth in Scripture.

Conscience: The moral goodness or blameworthiness of one's own conduct, intentions, or character together with a feeling of obligation to do right or be good. Conformity to what one considers to be correct, right, or morally good. Sensitive regard for fairness or justice.

Heritage: Property that descends to an heir. Something transmitted by or acquired from a predecessor: legacy, inheritance. Something possessed as a result of one's natural situation or birth: birthright.

Ritual: Of or relating to rites or a ritual: ceremonial, religious law, social custom. A prescribed form or manner governing the words or actions for a ceremony.

DISCUSSION AND REFLECTION:

1. What is the standard principle of justice between God and humanity?
 2. Does God as Judge treat people differently because their background?
 3. What is it that one day God will judge through Jesus Christ?
 4. Some say, because the Gentiles do not know what was expected of them they couldn't be held accountable for their actions. Sounds good, but Paul says they are accountable. Why ?
 5. Is keeping the law or being physically circumcised more important ?
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MEMORY VERSE:

“But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the righteous and on the unrighteous.”
Matthew 5:44-45