

Romans

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Romans 2:7-11



Vss. 7-8

- As we said when we looked at vss. 5-6, the Jews were claiming that simply because they were Jews, that they were exempt from God's judgment. Paul pointed out that clearly in both Psalms 62:12 and Proverbs 24:12 that God will render to us according to our work/deeds. You see it again at The Judgment in Revelation 20:12-13 where the dead are judged, "every one of them according to their deeds". But when Paul wrote this letter to the Romans, the church did not yet have The Revelation. But here, Paul is quoting their own Scripture to them. In our own time it is always good to remember that Scripture always trumps the latest popular idea every time.
- But what of those deeds? There are those people who, because of the faith that pours out of them, live every day with their minds on the Kingdom. Therefore, they seek the things of the Kingdom: they seek the glory of God; they seek the honor of admittance into Heaven; they seek a life so valued by God that He would grant immortality and eternal life. "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied", (Matthew 5:6). But remember it is God who does the valuing and the feeding. It is nothing that we do on our own.
- But there are others who live every day with only the things of the world on their minds. As such, they are selfishly ambitious, and thus place their own desires above God and above the needs of others. They do not obey or even consider the Truth of Jesus Christ, but only consider that which is unrighteous. They place themselves on the throne of God, inviting wrath and indignation from both God and people. Many such people would never consider themselves "bad people" and may quickly point to money and time they have given to charity and other "good works". But only God is good (Mark 10:18). The Jews would know well, Isaiah 64:6, "For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment /rags". Recall what Jesus said about salt once it loses its flavor: "It is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men" (Matthew 5:13b). What Paul wants to remind the Jews of the Roman church and all of us, is to remember that when we do anything good, it is not "**we**" who are doing it, but the Spirit of God who is at work in us, acting through us, because it is not I who live, but Christ who lives in me, (Galatians 2:20). It is the Spirit of God in us that gives us ultimate value on the day of Judgement.

- Heinrich Heine was one of the more popular German writers and poets in the first half of the 1800's. He was a Jew, but he turned his back on his faith. His writings centered around his disillusionment with life and wrote with a very negative biting sarcasm. He was asked once where he would spend eternity and he instantly replied "Heaven". When asked why he was so confident, given his wayward life, he casually responded, "God will forgive". When pressed further how he could be so sure, he replied, "It is His trade". Such a view is still quite common yet is completely in error. To presume that God's forgiveness offers a blank check to sin is to misunderstand God completely.

Vss. 9-10

- So at The Judgement there will be "tribulation and distress" for everyone who does evil, puts his/herself on God's throne, lives a life of selfishness. Paul says it will come to the Jew first, because the Jews have always known God's way, have long been God's "Chosen People", so they will receive condemnation first because they knew righteousness first and rejected it. Then the same judgement will fall on the Gentile, because now they too know the Truth and have no excuse.
- But there will also be reward at The Judgement, for those in whom the Spirit of God is at work. Glory and honor and peace will come to them. Again, this will come to the Jew first, but the same will come to the Gentile. It is the story of the "Laborers in the Vineyard" from Matthew 20. The owner hired a group of laborers to work at a certain price and they agreed. Later he found more laborers and, in the end, paid them all the same amount of money, even though some had been working longer than others. But each received the same out of the justice and generosity of the owner.

Vs. 11

- There is an old saying that the ground at the foot of the cross is always level. It is not merely that God does not play favorites, but that sin has so thoroughly corrupted the whole of humanity...again...that we are all passengers on a doomed ship. For all of us have become like one who is "unclean". It comes down to just what we hunger and thirst for. If we hunger and thirst for the things of the world, then we will have our reward in the realm of rust, moth, and decay. If we hunger and thirst for righteousness, then we will be rewarded in the Kingdom where our treasure has been laid up, where rust and moth cannot destroy. As William Barclay puts it, "in God's economy there is no favored nation status".