

March 22, 2026

God's Good News Story: The Church Alive & Growing

Romans: For Today's World - Part 4

"Beyond Judge Judy: Facing the Ultimate Judge"

Paul's letter to the Romans, written around A.D. 57 while he was in the city of Corinth, Greece. It was written to a diverse group of Jewish and Gentile Christians in Rome, addresses the challenges of unity and faithfulness in a multicultural, often hostile environment. It appears that this letter was hand delivered by a faithful servant and friend of Paul, a lady by the name of Phoebe, from a nearby port city town of Cenchrea. The Letter to the Romans centers on humanity's universal need for salvation, justification by faith in Jesus Christ, the transformative power of grace, emphasizes unity between Jewish and Gentile believers and the call to live by the Spirit. "*Romans For Today's World*" highlights how these foundational truths call the modern church to embrace grace, pursue righteousness, break down barriers of division, and embody Christlike love and service in a complex world. In other words, Romans is a life changing, purpose directing book that hopefully will bring a great effect upon us today in 2026.

Romans 1–3:20 paints a sobering picture of humanity's universal brokenness, showing that whether Jew or Gentile, religious or irreligious, all fall short of God's standard and are in need of His mercy. Paul systematically dismantles every excuse and false hope, revealing that no one can claim righteousness by their own efforts or heritage. In light of our series theme, "***Romans for the World Today: God's Good News Story***," these chapters remind us that the diagnosis of our spiritual condition is both honest and necessary—because only when we recognize our need can we truly appreciate the hope, grace, and transformation that the gospel offers to every person, everywhere, today.

Imagine humanity standing together in a grand courtroom, each person—regardless of background, morality, or religion—waiting for the verdict. As the evidence is read, it becomes clear that everyone has fallen short; every attempt to justify ourselves, whether by good deeds, religious rituals, or judging others, is exposed as insufficient. The Judge's standard is perfect, and the law acts like a mirror, revealing the dirt on every face and silencing every excuse. The universal problem is guilt: "There is none righteous, not even one."

Yet, just as the gavel is about to fall, the Judge does something astonishing—He steps down from the bench and offers a pardon at His own expense. This is the universal hope: grace. No one can earn it, but everyone can receive it. In God's courtroom, the bad news of our guilt sets the stage for the best news of all—through Jesus, the Judge becomes our Savior, and the condemned are invited to walk free.

Today's passage from Romans 2:2-3:20...paints a vivid picture of God as the perfectly impartial Judge before whom no one has an excuse. Whether you are a moralist, a religious person, or someone with no religious background at all, God's standard is the same: He judges not by outward appearance or religious ritual, but by the truth of our hearts and deeds. Those who judge others while committing the same sins are condemned by their own hypocrisy, and even those who possess God's law are not

justified by hearing it, but by doing it. True righteousness is not about external observance, but about a transformed heart—a reality only God can see. Paul then dismantles any sense of spiritual superiority, showing that both Jews and Gentiles are under sin and accountable to God. The law, whether written on tablets or on the conscience, exposes everyone’s guilt and then silences every defense. **“There is none righteous, not even one.”** The result is a universal verdict: all stand guilty before God, unable to justify themselves by works or heritage. The law’s true purpose is to reveal our need for grace, driving us to seek mercy from the only One who can truly save.

KEY VERSES

Romans 2:1... *“Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.”*

Romans 2:11... *“For God shows no partiality.”*

Romans 3:19–20... *“Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”*

The Courtroom Scene

Romans 1:18-3:20 is a courtroom scene

- The prosecution (God's law) presents evidence
- The verdict: **“Guilty”** (3:19)
- Every mouth is stopped—no defense, no excuse. If you think you can talk your way out of trouble, just remember—not even Judge Judy or Judge Wapner could get you off the hook in God’s courtroom!
- Thankfully, the True, Righteous Eternal **Judge Jesus** has a real plan (Rom 3:21-26)

Sermon Title:

“Beyond Judge Judy: Facing the Ultimate Judge”

I. No Excuses in God’s Courtroom (2:1–5)

Imagine stepping into a grand courtroom, the kind where the Judge knows every thought, every motive, every secret action. The room is filled with people pointing fingers—each one convinced someone else is more guilty. But as the evidence is read, it becomes clear: every accuser is also an offender. In God’s courtroom, there are no plea deals or clever defenses, and no one can plead innocence by comparison. The Judge’s standard is perfect, and His verdict is just. Romans 2:1–5 reminds us that when we judge others, we condemn ourselves, because we are guilty of the very same things.

God's judgment is impartial—He shows no favoritism, and the ground is level at the foot of the cross. So, before we rush to pass judgment on others, Scripture calls us to examine our own hearts. Are we excusing in ourselves what we condemn in others? Are we relying on comparison to feel better about our own shortcomings? In God's courtroom, every excuse is stripped away, and what matters is not how we stack up against our neighbor, but how we stand before a holy God. The call is to humility and repentance, to recognize our need for mercy, and to remember that grace is available to all who come honestly before the Judge.

Romans 2:1-5...*Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. 2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. 3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? 5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.*

Key Point: Everyone who judges others is guilty of the same things. No one can plead innocence by comparison. Remember: God's judgment is impartial (2:2). Self-righteous judgment blinds us to our own need for grace—God's standard is not comparison with others, but honest repentance before Him.

Application: Before you judge or criticize someone else, pause and examine your own heart. Ask yourself: Am I excusing in myself what I condemn in others? Instead of presuming on God's patience, let His kindness move you to genuine repentance and humility. Today, respond to God's grace by turning from hidden sins and extending the same patience and mercy to others that He has shown to you.

"The ground is level at the foot of the cross."

II. God Judges According to Truth (2:6–16)

Romans 2:11 *For there is no partiality with God.*

In this passage, Paul paints a sobering picture of God's coming judgment: every person will stand before Him and be repaid according to their deeds, without exception or favoritism (Romans 2:6, 11). Those who patiently pursue good, seeking God's glory and eternal life, will receive honor and peace (Romans 2:7, 10), while those who reject the truth and follow selfish ambition will face wrath and distress (Romans 2:8–9).

God's standard is not based on religious background or outward knowledge of the law, but on the reality of our actions and the condition of our hearts (Romans 2:12–15). Whether Jew or Gentile, whether we have the law written on tablets or only on our conscience, all will be judged impartially by Christ, who alone sees and will judge even the secrets of every heart (Romans 2:16).

<https://michaelincontext.com/impartial-judgment-of-god-romans-21-6/>
<https://fcbartow.org/sermons/gods-impartial-judgment-romans-21-16/>

Key Point:

God's judgment is absolutely impartial—He looks beyond our backgrounds, traditions, or words and will render to each person according to their deeds. It is not enough to simply know what is right; what matters is whether we actually live it out. The law reveals sin but cannot save (3:20). *“The law is like a mirror—it shows the dirt but can't wash it away.”*

Application:

Don't rely on religious performance; seek genuine repentance. This week, honestly examine your actions and motives: Are you persevering in doing good, or are you simply hearing God's truth without letting it shape your life? Ask God to reveal any areas where you are living for self rather than for His glory. Take a concrete step—whether it's making amends, serving someone in need, or obeying a difficult command—to move from being a hearer to a doer of God's Word, knowing that He sees and values every act done from a sincere heart.

III. Religious Privilege Doesn't Exempt

In this passage, Paul addresses those who take pride in their religious identity and knowledge, warning that outward rituals and spiritual credentials mean nothing if not matched by inward obedience and authentic living (Romans 2:17–24). He exposes the hypocrisy of teaching others while failing to apply God's truth to oneself, reminding his listeners that breaking the very law they boast in brings dishonor to God and causes His name to be blasphemed among outsiders. True righteousness, Paul insists, is not about external marks or religious performance, but about a transformed heart—a *“circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter”* (Romans 2:25–29). God is not impressed by appearances; He looks for genuine faith and obedience that flow from within, and it is this inward reality that receives praise from God, not the applause of people.

Key Point: Possessing the law or religious rituals doesn't guarantee righteousness. True faith is not measured by outward religious identity or knowledge, but by an authentic, Spirit-transformed heart that lives out what it teaches. External religion without internal reality is worthless (2:29). This recalls Jesus' comment about *“white-washed tombs”*. (Mt. 23:27) Outwardly clean, but inwardly dead. *“A true believer/Jew is one inwardly; circumcision is a matter of the heart.”*

Practical Application:

This week, honestly ask yourself: Am I relying on my religious background, knowledge, or reputation, while neglecting to apply God's truth to my own life? Identify one area where your actions don't match your beliefs and take a concrete step to align your life with the gospel you profess. Remember, God is not impressed by appearances—He desires genuine obedience and transformation from the inside out. Is your faith authentic or just for show?

IV. God's Faithfulness, Universal Guilt, and the Silence Before Grace (Romans 3:1–20)

Romans 3:3,4...³ *What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? ⁴ May it never be! Rather, let God be found true.*

Key Point: God remains faithful even when we are not; all are under sin and the law leaves everyone accountable, with no defense left.

Illustration: Like two beggars arguing over crumbs, we are all hungry—no one has enough to claim superiority. In the courtroom of God, the verdict is clear and the room falls silent; every mouth is stopped, and no one can justify themselves.

Theological Emphasis: Universal guilt precedes universal grace—only when every mouth is stopped can the gospel be heard. The law exposes our need and prepares us for the scarlet thread of grace: the bad news sets up the good news.

CONCLUSION: The courtroom falls silent; the verdict is clear. The law makes everyone accountable to God—no defense left.

No matter your background or your best efforts, we all stand guilty and empty-handed before God—yet in that silence, His faithfulness shines. The good news is that when we stop trying to justify ourselves and admit our need, God offers grace through Jesus Christ. Today, don't compare or defend—simply receive the gift of forgiveness and new life that only the gospel can give.

Stop trying to justify yourself, rest in Christ's finished work. Neither Judge Judy or Judge Wapner can save you now. In God's courtroom, every mouth is stopped, but the True Judge Jesus Christ offers grace through faith. Will you accept His verdict or keep making excuses?

CLOSING CHALLENGE:

If we are going to be a 'Church Alive and Growing' we need to:

- **Admit Our Guilt - Stop defending yourself.**
- **Confess Our Need for Christ. Rest in Him.**
- **Receive Grace, Extend Grace - Stop judging others.**
- **Share The Good News to Others.**

"Next week, the best news you've ever heard: 'But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law' (3:21). The gospel is coming!"

Following is the entire Romans Passage for Today's Sermon:

The Impartiality of God

2 Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. 2 And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. 3 But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same *yourself*, that you will escape the judgment of God? 4 Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? 5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: 7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; 8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. 9 *There will be* tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God.

12 For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; 13 for *it is* not the hearers of the Law *who* are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, 15 in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, 16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

The Jew Is Condemned by the Law

17 But if you bear the name “Jew” and rely upon the Law and boast in God, 18 and know *His* will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, 19 and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, 21 you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? 22 You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? 24 For “THE NAME OF GOD IS BLASPHEMED AMONG THE GENTILES BECAUSE OF YOU,” just as it is written.

25 For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. 26 So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter *of the Law* and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? 28 For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. 29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

All the World Guilty

3 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the benefit of circumcision? 2 Great in every respect. First of all, that they were entrusted with the oracles of God. 3 What then? If some did not believe, their unbelief will not nullify the faithfulness of God, will it? 4 May it never be! Rather, let God be found true, though every man *be found* a liar, as it is written,

“THAT YOU MAY BE JUSTIFIED IN YOUR WORDS,
AND PREVAIL WHEN YOU ARE JUDGED.”

⁵ But if our unrighteousness demonstrates the righteousness of God, what shall we say? The God who inflicts wrath is not unrighteous, is He? (I am speaking in human terms.) ⁶ May it never be! For otherwise, how will God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie the truth of God abounded to His glory, why am I also still being judged as a sinner? ⁸ And why not *say* (as we are slanderously reported and as some claim that we say), “Let us do evil that good may come”? Their condemnation is just.

⁹ What then? Are we better than they? Not at all; for we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are all under sin; ¹⁰ as it is written,

“THERE IS NONE RIGHTEOUS, NOT EVEN ONE;

¹¹ THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS,

THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD;

¹² ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS;

THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD,

THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE.”

¹³ “THEIR THROAT IS AN OPEN GRAVE,

WITH THEIR TONGUES THEY KEEP DECEIVING,”

“THE POISON OF ASPS IS UNDER THEIR LIPS”;

¹⁴ “WHOSE MOUTH IS FULL OF CURSING AND BITTERNESS”;

¹⁵ “THEIR FEET ARE SWIFT TO SHED BLOOD,

¹⁶ DESTRUCTION AND MISERY ARE IN THEIR PATHS,

¹⁷ AND THE PATH OF PEACE THEY HAVE NOT KNOWN.”

¹⁸ “THERE IS NO FEAR OF GOD BEFORE THEIR EYES.”

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, so that every mouth may be closed and all the world may become accountable to God; ²⁰ because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law *comes* the knowledge of sin.