

The Book of Romans
The Impartiality of God

Romans 2:11

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Well, I invite you to take your Bibles and turn with me to Romans 2.

Several years ago my family and I went on a history trip. We went up to the historic triangle. We visited Washington D.C. If you've had the chance to do that, you know that in Washington D.C. there are many images picturing justice. The most famous of those, of course, is at the Supreme Court. This is how the Supreme Court describes the statue that's there and what it represents, on its official website.

One of the most recognized legal symbols visible in the architecture of the Supreme Court building is the female figure representing *Justice*. Portraying *Justice* as a female figure dates back to the depictions of *Themis* and *Justicia* in ancient mythology. *Themis*, known for her clear-sightedness, was the Greek goddess of Justice and Law. And in Roman mythology *Justicia*, or *Justice*, was one of the four Virtues. Over time, *Justice* became associated with scales to represent impartiality and a sword to symbolize power. During the 16th century, Justice was often portrayed with a blindfold.

And then they go on to discuss the fact that there's a lot of debate about what was the original significance of the blindfold, but they finish with this. "Today, the blindfold is generally accepted as a symbol of impartiality," that is, impartiality in judgment.

Although men long for a judicial system that is completely blind to external differences, completely impartial, as long as we live in a fallen world such perfect impartiality is impossible. It's even, frankly, hard for us to imagine what that would be like because partiality is so much a part of who we are. Yet, it is perfect impartiality that describes the character of our God today and describes His future judgment that's to come. That is Paul's point in Romans 2:11 that we come to this morning.

Now again, let me remind you that this passage stands in a larger context. Beginning in chapter 2 verse 1 running through chapter 3 verse 8, Paul is indicting the Jews, those who claim to have a relationship with the true God, but who in fact believe that they could attain a right standing before God by their own righteousness. Paul is demonstrating that's impossible. In fact, every human being, Jew or Gentile, stands guilty before God and needs the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So in chapter 2, Paul explains that the Jews and every moral religious person needs the gospel for three reasons. We're looking at just the first of those reasons in verses 1 to 16, because knowing what is sinful and condemning it in others will not allow you to escape God's future wrath. Notice verse 3 of chapter 2, the Jews had concluded that they would escape God's judgment even though, verse 1 says, they committed the very same sins the pagans did. They came to that mistaken conclusion because they had flawed views about who God really is.

So as Paul illustrated for the Roman Christians to whom he wrote this letter, how he typically showed the Jews their guilt, their need of the gospel, Paul explains as well, how he then would set out to correct their flawed views of God. These are the very same flawed views of God that all moral religious people hold, mistakenly believing.

First of all, moral religious people often have a flawed view of God's justice. We saw this in verses 1 to 3. Here's how the Jews thought, they thought that because they didn't approve of the sins against God that the pagans committed in chapter 1, but in fact condemned them, that somehow that meant they would escape God's judgment. Paul's response to them in verse 2 of chapter 2 is that God's verdict is always "according to truth."

Secondly, they had a flawed view of God's common grace. We saw this in verses 4 and 5. The Jews thought that because they enjoyed so many temporal blessings from God that must mean God was actually pleased with them. Paul tells them that's a serious misunderstanding of God's common grace. In fact, the goodness of God in their lives, the overwhelming goodness of God, was intended to lead them to repentance. God's goodness to them in this life was completely unrelated to what would happen to them at the judgment. And in fact, the sobering truth is that if they continue to enjoy God's goodness here, even as they're enjoying it, but not repenting, they are accumulating God's future wrath at the judgment.

The third flawed view that they had of God was a flawed view of God's judgment. This is in verses 6 to 16, a flawed view of God's judgment, because they thought that the future judgment would be different for them, because of their privileged position, because they were descendants of Abraham, because they were part of the covenant God had made with Abraham; it was going to be different for them.

To correct their skewed perspective, in verses 6 to 16, Paul lays out four foundational principles about God's future judgment. Let's read, beginning in chapter 2 verse 6 and I'll read down through verse 11. Picking up from verse 5 the reference to God,

God WILL RENDER TO EACH PERSON ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory

and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.

Now, the last couple of weeks we studied the first foundational principle of God's judgment and that is, that God's future judgment of unbelievers will be according to their deeds, according to deeds. We saw this in verses 6 to 10 and we spent two weeks on that. If you weren't here I encourage you to go and catch up online because it's such a foundational passage.

Today we come to the second foundational principle and that is, that God's future judgment will not only be according to our deeds, but it will be without partiality. Simply stated in verse 11, notice, "For there is no partiality with God." Now, that's not a word that we use often in everyday speech and it can be easily misconstrued and misunderstood, so let's define it a little more carefully.

The Greek word for partiality is actually a compound word. That is, it's made up of two Greek words put together to form a noun. Literally, it translates this way, to receive the face. This word, the Greek noun, doesn't appear in secular Greek at all before the New Testament, but the two words, to receive and face, do appear together in the Septuagint, the Bible of the first century, to translate a similar Hebrew expression. So most scholars believe that either Greek-speaking Jews or those who were Jewish in background but became Christians, who were familiar with the Old Testament, one of those groups probably coined this term from the Old Testament, from a familiar Hebrew expression.

Now, the Hebrew expression that this was translating, literally means, to lift up the face or to raise the face. You can picture in a typical Asian greeting, if you came before someone who was your superior, more powerful than you, you would bow the face to the ground. If that superior raised your face it was a symbol of their recognition of you, their esteem of you. You can see how this would eventually come to be misused. Someone who wasn't worthy of being recognized was esteemed, was recognized, and so this word eventually came to be used almost exclusively in a negative way. And often in a setting like that of a judge, a judge who unjustly raises the face of someone who is guilty. In other words, the judge is not impartial, but rather shows partiality to the person, raising their face when, in fact, they don't deserve that.

It's used this way a number of times in the Old Testament. Let me give you a couple of examples. Leviticus 19:15 says, "You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great." You shall not raise the face of the poor, lift their face. In other words, don't treat the person whose case you're hearing based on the external factors of either their poverty or their wealth. Instead, "you are to judge your neighbor fairly." In Psalm 82:2, "How long will you judge unjustly and show partiality to the wicked?" Raise the face of the wicked. In Proverbs 18:5, "To show partiality to the wicked," to raise the face of the wicked, "is not good, nor to thrust aside the righteous in judgment."

So this Hebrew idea of raising or lifting the face became, in the Greek of the Septuagint, the Bible of the first century, it became, to receive the face. You can see how they were closely related and this resulting Greek noun that's here in our text in verse 11 came to refer to any form of preferential treatment.

Now, the problem with this word is there is no simple English word really, because when we speak of this sin in its full range we often use two different English words to describe it, the word favoritism and the word prejudice. One is the, sort of, positive, showing favor unjustly. The other is negative, showing contempt unjustly. So, favoritism is unfairly showing favor to someone based solely on external factors and prejudice is showing contempt for someone based entirely on external factors.

Now, what are these factors? Well, D. Edmond Hiebert writes this, "This Greek word always denotes favoritism or partiality, a biased judgment," listen carefully, "based on external circumstances such as race, wealth, social rank, or popularity, while disregarding the individual's intrinsic merit." In other words, treating someone based solely on external, unimportant factors. Now, look again at chapter 2 verse 11. Paul tells us here that God has no part of this. "There is no partiality with God." God doesn't show favoritism. God isn't prejudiced. "There is no partiality with God."

Understand what Paul is doing here in verse 11, Paul is making a sweeping assertion about the character of our God. God is completely in His person unbiased, unprejudiced. He is utterly objective. He is without favoritism. He is always fair and just and that is true of God in every conceivable way and in every conceivable manifestation. So you can see then that this concept is much larger than the context here in Romans 2. So what I want us to do this morning is, I want us to first examine this truth about our God in the context of the entirety of the Scripture and then I want us to come back and examine it in its context here in Romans 2.

So first of all, let's step back and consider the big picture outside of this text. There is with God no partiality, first of all, in His character. This is what the Scripture teaches us. You see it stated here, "There is no partiality with God." This is part of the essence of who God is. This is an unequivocal, unchanging assertion about the character of God.

Now, the Old Testament and the New Testament consistently teach that our God's character is totally free of partiality. Go back with me to Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy 10. This is one of the great Old Testament assertions of this truth. Moses writes, notice verse 17, "Yahweh your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords." He's the only one, in other words. That's a statement of monotheism. And He is "the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe." He goes on to explain what this lack of partiality looks like. Not only does He not take a bribe, but "He executes justice for the orphan and the widow and He shows love for the alien by giving him food and clothing." He says, let me explain to you that part of the essence of our God is that He has no partiality. He does not show partiality.

Turn over to 2 Chronicles, 2 Chronicles 19. Jehoshaphat, one of the bright spots in Judah, one of the kings who instituted some reforms, is appointing judges here, 2 Chronicles 19:6, “He said to the judges, ‘Consider what you’re doing, for you do not judge for man but for Yahweh who is with you when you render judgment.’” Now watch verse 7, “‘Now then let the fear of Yahweh be upon you; be very careful what you do, for Yahweh our God will have no part in unrighteousness or partiality or the taking of a bribe.’” He will have absolutely nothing to do with partiality.

Now as fallen human beings, you and I are exactly the opposite. Our lives are filled with this sin. In fact, it’s so much a part of the air we breathe that we don’t even notice it. I was thinking this week about some of, even the sort of, everyday humorous examples of this. You know, it always strikes me how differently people respond to me when I go into a restaurant or a store and I’m dressed in a suit and tie versus when I go in, you know, in jeans and a t-shirt. I know some of you don’t believe I ever wear those, you only see me here, I do. But it’s amazing the different response that you get. What is that? That is just part of the essence of who we are. We just naturally respond to people differently based on external circumstances. We don’t even think about it.

I see this often when it comes to my daughters. You know, we went the other day to get one of the little snow cone stands down in the city where we live. We went to get a snow cone and we’re standing in line. My daughters were in front of me, my teenage daughters, and I was standing in line behind them, and it was fascinating to see the different response that the teenage boy who was waiting on us had to them and to me. Now, you know, I’m standing behind them, at this point maybe he wasn’t even fully aware we were together, but he’s taking their order and he was the most helpful young man I have ever seen. You know, he couldn’t have been, shown more care about what they ordered and to make sure they got the right thing. And then when I came up, I think all I looked like was a flat piece of plastic called a credit card. I think that was it. He just looked right through me and you know it’s remarkable, sometimes when I’m with my daughters in that kind of situation it’s not uncommon for them to get free stuff and I never do. I don’t understand.

Sadly, there are much less humorous examples of how favoritism plays out in our world every day. It is just part of the fabric of human existence. Tragically, we are also prone to display the negative side of this sin, prejudice. We can be tempted to look at a person’s appearance, the color of their skin, how they’re dressed, and think of them or treat them badly simply based on those external factors. In fact, there are as many variations of this sin as there are sinful human hearts. You can show favoritism or prejudice on the basis of dress, appearance, personality, age (some youth are prejudiced against their parents or older adults because of their age and some older adults are prejudiced against youth because they’re younger), ethnicity, socioeconomic status, wealth, skills, intelligence. You can be tempted to treat people differently because of the

car they drive or the neighborhood they live in or don't, the construction of their home, the color of their skin, and on and on it goes.

Listen carefully, Paul's point and the point of the Scripture is that our God is nothing like that. "There is no partiality with God." He doesn't play favorites and He isn't prejudiced. In fact, I think to help clarify our thinking on this, let me just briefly run through what Scripture identifies as some specific factors that never influence God in how He treats people.

Here are some ways that God never is influenced by when it comes to how He treats people. First of all, external appearance. God doesn't care what we look like. He made us. First Samuel 16:7, "the LORD said to Samuel, 'Do not look at David's older brother's appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.'" God has never been one time influenced by how you look and never will be.

He's never influenced by any kind of bribe. Deuteronomy 10:17 I read just a moment ago says, "the LORD your God is the God of gods, the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, the awesome God who does not show partiality," and one way that happens is He doesn't take bribes. You say, people try to bribe God? All the time. They try to bribe God with what they've done for Him, with their penance, with their religious ritual, with their attending spiritual events like this one, with performing spiritual activities, with giving their possessions to spiritual causes. Now don't misunderstand, those things are right for us to do because God commands some of those things, that we do them. But don't misunderstand, God is completely unpersuaded and unmoved by any attempt to use those things to manipulate Him or to bribe Him. God's unmoved by that, uninfluenced.

Thirdly, God's uninfluenced or unmoved by the form or expression which sin takes, whether it's open flagrant sin or whether it's secret self righteous sin. We look around and we see people around us, particularly here in North Texas, and we say, you know, they're pretty good people, because they're outwardly moral. God sees right through that. He is uninfluenced by that.

Look at Matthew 9. Matthew 9:9, Jesus calls Matthew, Levi, to be His disciple. "He was sitting in the tax collector's booth. He said to him, 'Follow Me!' And he got up and followed Him." Here's Matthew's conversion and call to ministry. Verse 10, Matthew then throws a party for all of his tax collector friends,

it happened that as Jesus was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to the disciples, "Why is your Teacher eating with the tax collectors and sinners?" And when Jesus heard this, He said, "It is not those who are healthy who need a doctor, but those who are sick. But go and

learn what this means: 'I DESIRE COMPASSION, AND NOT SACRIFICE,' for I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Now, don't misunderstand Jesus here. He's not saying that the tax collectors were sinners and needed a Savior, but the Pharisees didn't. He's in essence saying exactly the opposite. He's saying you're all sinners and I'm here to interact with those who understand that they are. You see, God sees right through. He sees an openly profligate life of sin and He sees a self-righteous life of sin. How often did He say to the Pharisees, you appear outwardly righteous but inside you are full of sin. So God is uninfluenced by a good moral life versus an open flagrant life. He sees sin as sin.

Number four, God is uninfluenced by position or rank. Elihu, in giving counsel to Job, says in Job 34:19, "God shows no partiality to princes." You know, God is unimpressed by those in political power in our world, absolutely uninfluenced. He doesn't take them as having any more value than the lowest subject over which they rule. "He shows no partiality to princes nor regards the rich above the poor, for they are all the work of His hands?" Proverbs 22:2, "The rich and the poor have a common bond, the LORD is the maker of them all." God's unimpressed, He's not influenced by position or rank.

Number five, He's not influenced by reputation and influence. You know, we are. We see somebody famous and we think, wow, we're sort of carried away with that. God isn't. You see this in the heart of the Apostle Paul in Galatians 2:6. Paul is a new apostle and there are those mainstays of the apostles, Peter, James, and John. In Galatians 2:6 he says, "those who were of high reputation," James our Lord's brother, "(what they were makes no difference to me; God shows no partiality) – well, those who were of reputation contributed nothing to me." What's Paul saying? He's not denigrating the office of apostle, he was an apostle. What he's saying is, God doesn't have favorites even among the apostles, in the sense that that one's reputation, one's influence is not what matters to God. Let me put it to you this way. There are no famous Christians with God. There are no Christian celebrities in God's sight. Not one.

God is uninfluenced by intellect. He gave us the mental capacity we have. Yes, we're supposed to be good stewards of it, to use it as best we can, but we can't produce more intellect than we have and, in fact, 1 Corinthians 1:26 says, "consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh." God wasn't influenced by the level of one's intelligence in terms of who He chose. Intellect doesn't matter to God.

Ethnicity is not something that influences God. Ethnicity, John 4:9, you remember Jesus, "the Samaritan woman said to Him, 'How is it that You, being a Jew, ask me for a drink since I am a Samaritan woman?' (For Jews have no dealings with Samaritans.)" That didn't matter to Jesus. It didn't matter what her ethnicity was. He brought the gospel to her and that whole town. The same is true of the heart of God. There is no influence on God based on one's ethnicity.

In fact, turn to Galatians 3 and just stay here a moment. Galatians 3, Paul is arguing in verse 29 of Galatians 3, this is the point he's been arguing to, that "if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to the promise." In other words, if you have believed in the Messiah, then you're truly Abraham's descendants even if you don't have a drop of Jewish blood flowing in your body because you're of the faith of Abraham. And if you've come to Christ, verse 27, "We were all baptized," or immersed, this isn't so much water baptism but the spirit immersion into Christ, "we have clothed ourselves with Christ." And because of that, "There is neither Jew nor Greek." Doesn't mean I'm no longer a Gentile and others aren't still Jews. It means those distinctions don't matter. God doesn't care about your ethnicity. He's the one who made us as we are.

Number eight, God doesn't care about social status and wealth. He's uninfluenced by social status and wealth. Look here again at verse 28, "There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man." Your status in society doesn't matter to God. He's the one who maps out our days, who lays out our course.

God doesn't care about gender. Notice here again in verse 28, "there is neither male nor female." That doesn't mean there aren't leadership roles in the home, doesn't mean there aren't leadership roles in the church. He's saying when it comes to our spiritual standing before God, we're all equal. He made man and woman in His image. We all are image bearers. We all have spiritual equality before God. God doesn't care if you're a man or a woman, that doesn't influence God.

Here's one that's not surprising in terms of, that God would be like this, but it is surprising that this point is made. God is not influenced by peer pressure, by majority vote. Listen to Exodus 23:2. This verse is so appropriate for today. Exodus 23:2, "You shall not follow the masses in doing evil, nor shall you testify in a dispute so as to turn aside after a multitude in order to pervert *justice*." In other words, don't go along with the crowd. And he's basing that on the fact that God doesn't. You understand, God is never moved by what most people on this planet think. He doesn't care.

So understand then that God's perspective and His treatment of someone has nothing to do with those things. There is no partiality in God's character. There is also no partiality in His commands of us. Let me put that differently. In other words, God commands impartiality of us. If it's part of who He is, it needs to be part of who we are as well. I'm not going to spend a lot of time here, let me just give you this little list. This is what Scripture commands of us when it comes to impartiality.

Number one, human judges must remain completely impartial in deciding all legal issues. Look at Deuteronomy 1. Deuteronomy 1:17, Moses is putting judges into place because he can't judge the entire, you know, 2,000,000 Israelites, and he says to them, in verse 17 of Deuteronomy 1, "You shall not show partiality in judgment," because, as we already learned, God isn't partial in

judgment, “you shall hear the small and the great alike. You shall not fear man, for the judgment is God’s.” He’s saying listen, you’re just standing in God’s place and God isn’t partial when He judges, so you’re not to be either, human judges.

Secondly, earthly authorities, all earthly authorities, must treat those under them with respect and fairness. Listen, if you’re in a position of authority, the people beneath you are made in God’s image. God doesn’t see any real distinction in intrinsic quality between you and the people over whom you sit and therefore you’re to treat them with justice and fairness. There are a number of examples, but Ephesians 6:9 is talking about masters to their slaves and says this, “masters, do the same things to your slaves, and give up threatening, knowing that both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no partiality with Him.” So as you exercise your authority, parents, employer, governmental official, law enforcement officer, as you exercise your authority you better remember that God expects you to be impartial based on those external factors, just as He is.

Number three, he commands that church discipline must be carried out without any respect of persons. In 1 Timothy 5:21 Paul is talking about elders who sin and are unrepentant and he says this, “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels, to maintain these principles,” that is of church discipline, “without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality.” We can’t decide to discipline someone and not to discipline someone else based on these external factors of how important they are, what kind of reputation they have in the world, whether or not they’re an elder. If there’s unrepentant sin Paul says you have to be impartial just as God is impartial.

Number four, no believer is to treat other Christians with partiality based merely on external factors. I wish I had time to take you to James 2. If you’ve never studied that passage go online, you can listen to the series I did on that section of James 2. But it’s so foundational, God says listen, if two, and it’s hard to know whether it’s two unbelievers or two new converts, come into your church, don’t you dare treat one of them respectfully and one of them without respect based on how they’re dressed. Or we could contemporize it, based on the car they drive into the parking lot with, or whatever. We must not change our response to people and our treatment of people based on how impressive they are externally.

Number five, all believers must diligently pursue holiness in the fear of God because God is without partiality. Listen to 1 Peter 1:17, “If you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each one’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay on earth.” If you call God, Father, then you better remember that He’ll judge you impartially too and so you better pursue holiness in the fear of God. That’s the context of that passage.

So, God urges, commands us to be impartial as He is impartial. So, He is impartial in His character. He’s impartial in His commands of us. Thirdly, He is impartial in His actions. You see, the lack of partiality in the character of God affects His actions toward us.

Now, that brings us back to Romans 2. Go back there with me, Romans 2:11, because in context Paul's primary point with this assertion about God's impartiality is that at the future judgment God will judge all human beings with complete impartiality. Notice verse 11, "For there is no partiality with God." He will base his verdict on every human life based solely on the evidence, as we saw in verses 6 to 10. He will base it on the level of the person's knowledge, as we'll see in verses 12 to 15, and He will base it on their motives, the secret things, as verse 16 describes it. But it will be completely impartial.

Now notice that verse 11 begins with the word "For." That means it's intimately linked with verses 6 to 10. In verses 6 to 10 Paul makes his point positively. In verse 11 he makes it negatively. According to verses 6 to 10 God will judge according to deeds or based on the evidence. In verse 11 Paul adds that He will base it solely on the evidence; it will be completely impartial. There will be no inappropriate factors that will influence God's final decision, His verdict. "There is no partiality with God," so expect no special treatment at the judgment based on factors other than the evidence itself.

Now, believers, for us, we find great hope and encouragement here because now the evidence on which we are evaluated is not our own sin, it's not our lives, it's not what we have done, the words we have said, the things we have done. God's ultimate verdict on our lives, the verdict of righteous, is not based on my life, it's based on the life of Jesus Christ. So the fact that God is impartial gives me great hope, because when He looks at the evidence, not my evidence, but the evidence of Jesus Christ, His perfect life, His death, He can impartially and justly say, righteous.

But if you're not in Christ, if you're not a believer, if you've never repented of your sin and come to follow Jesus Christ as Lord, then understand this. When you stand before Jesus Christ, and you will, it will be at what John the Apostle calls the great white throne judgment in Revelation 20 and Jesus Christ will be the judge at that judgment. And Paul is here telling us that He will, on that day, be completely without favoritism or prejudice. He will be completely unbiased and objective. His final verdict will be based solely on His perfect knowledge of your life. He will not consider the country in which you were born, your ethnicity, your family, your parents. He will not consider your success, your position, your wealth, the car you drive in or the house in which you live.

It will not matter how popular you are, how many followers you have on Twitter or how many likes you have on Facebook. He will not look at your appearance or your portfolio or your socioeconomic status. He will not look at how high you have attained in your position in the company in which you work or how highly respected you are in your career. He will not look at how well other people think of you.

He will be uninfluenced by whether you lived an openly profligate life of sin or whether you lived a secret life of sin with supposed morality. He will not be impressed by your religious deeds, your religious rituals, the regularity of your attendance at church, spiritual activities you

performed, how much you've given of your money, because if those things were not done out of a redeemed heart and out of love for Him they will not matter.

God will do one thing and one thing only, He will measure your daily thoughts and words and actions against the perfect standard of His Law. In other words, He will measure your life against the yardstick of perfect love for Him and perfect love for others, and if you are not in Christ and you fall short of that standard, you will be found guilty by God and you will be sentenced to eternal Hell. You see, God is impartial in His judgment.

You know, when I was in school there were difficult subjects and difficult tests and there were times when the entire class would take the test and the results would come back and it was clear that all of us had done poorly and our hope in that moment was that the teacher would grade the test on a curve. You know what that means. Essentially, they would say, all right, you all did poorly, so instead of grading you against the perfect score on the test I'm going to give you a grade related to how you did to each other. Now, what that meant practically, if the test was hard enough, and this happened, you know, in the classroom, you could end up with a B instead of the D you actually earned on that test. It's not that you had truly done well. It's that compared to the rest of your classmates you had done reasonably well.

Sadly, many people think that's exactly how it will be at the judgment, that God will grade on a curve. But Paul and the rest of Scripture is clear, that God never, ever grades on a curve. He will not grade you against your classmates. He will grade you against the perfect standard of His Law.

I was thinking this week about this concept and it occurred to me that in the cross of Christ we have the most powerful, compelling, even appalling illustration that God is completely impartial in His judgment, that He is no respecter of persons. Because when God's own beloved Son had attributed to Him the sins of every person who would ever believe, God didn't stop a second in pouring out His wrath on His Son because He is completely impartial. So don't you even hope for a moment that you can escape the completely impartial justice of God if even God's own Son couldn't.

Now that's the bad news. And if we're honest with ourselves, if you just sit and think about that for a moment, apart from Christ that is a frightening, sobering reality. But there's good news. You see, because God is not only impartial in His judgment, He is also impartial in the offer of salvation, the free offer of salvation, and in the dispensing of His grace. He saves and He dispenses grace without partiality.

Look at Romans 1. Romans 1:16, Paul says, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it's the power of God for the spiritual rescue of everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek," or to the Gentiles. Listen, God doesn't care about your ethnicity. He makes the free offer of the gospel to all, to all people on this planet.

Turn over chapter 3, chapter 3 verse 21. Here's where Paul turns from the bad news to the good news for the first time in Romans, in the body of the letter to the Romans, and he says,

But now, apart from the Law *the* righteousness of God has been manifested, [*and this is not new, this was*] witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God [*which comes*] through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God and are justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus.

Listen, God is impartial when it comes to His offer of salvation and the grace He freely dispenses. He doesn't look at external factors. Those don't weigh Him. He is free in His offer of salvation. Look down at verse 30. In verse 29 he says,

is God the God of the Jews only? Is He not the God of the Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, since indeed God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith is one.

God's uninfluenced by all those things. He's impartial in His judgment, but He's also impartial in the offer of His grace, in the display of His grace and the offer of salvation. "There is no partiality with God." He will rescue anyone who repents and believes in His Son.

So I plead with you, as Paul did in 2 Corinthians 5 when he described himself as an ambassador. He says, "I beg you, I beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God." God has made a way to reconcile you and me to Himself through His Son, through His Son's life and death. You can know God your Creator. You can be reconciled to Him. I beg you, "be reconciled to Him," he says, to accept the offer of peace that He offers through the death of His Son.

You see, Jesus came and lived a perfect life. Jesus, God's Son, became fully man, lived a perfect life, the life you should have lived, and then He died on the cross. Not only a physical death, but enduring in that time the wrath of God against the sins of everyone who would ever believe in Him, fully satisfying the justice of God, and so God can offer that forgiveness to you. I beg you to respond.

But let me be very clear with you, if you refuse the impartial offer of God's grace, know that you will not, you cannot, escape the impartiality of His judgment. As Paul says in Romans 2:11, "For there is no partiality with God." Let's pray together.

Father, we confess that we are guilty of this sin every day. It is the very air we breathe. We show favoritism and we display prejudice as fallen human beings. Father, may we who are Your own, may You give us the commitment and resolve to be impartial in our treatment of others as You are.

Father also, fill our hearts with joy that not only are You impartial in Your judgment but You were impartial in the offer of salvation and in the grace You've shown to us. You didn't look at our intellect, at our reputation, our status, our appearance, our ethnicity, all of those things that we look at. You simply gave us Your love and grace because of who You are. Father, we thank You for Your impartiality.

And Father, I pray for those here this morning who, if nothing changes, will one day stand before You and face the impartiality of Your judgment. O God help them to be sobered by this passage. Help its truth to sink deep in their souls. May they find no rest day or night from the reality that someday You will take them from this life and they will stand in Your presence and in that day You will not play favorites. You will not grade on a curve. You will measure them against the perfect standard of Your Law and there is no partiality with You. O Father, may You bring them to true repentance and faith in Your Son. I pray in Jesus's name, amen.