



Sermon Growth Guide

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Diagnosis of the Heart | Romans 2:1-11

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Key Verse: "You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself" - Romans 2:1

Big Idea: It is easy to judge others. When we do judge others, we condemn ourselves because we all fall short of God's glory, Rom 3:23.

Foundations

There is something very satisfying and self-affirming in hearing the faults of others. We enjoy pointing out the wrongs of those not like us. We say to ourselves, "Oh, look at what those-kind-of-people do. We're not like them." When we do this, we feel good about ourselves in comparison to those bad people. Paul in writing to the Romans divides the world into Jews and Gentiles, Rom 1:16. These are the two groups of people who make up the Roman church. While these groups were two ethnic groups in Paul's time, they are also two ways of living in the world, "apart from the law" = Gentiles, and "under the law" = Jews, Romans 2:12. When Paul speaks of "apart from the law" and "under the law," we must ask what he means by "law." Law for Paul means Torah, the foundational Jewish story. So, Jews live under the foundational story in Genesis to Deuteronomy. What about the Gentiles? When Paul says "apart from the law" he does not mean lawless but apart from Torah. Gentiles live not under Torah but under what we might call First Principles or Natural Law. Gentiles know from the creation certain truths about God (Romans 1:20-21). This is their living law. So, when we read Romans 2:1-11 we should hear not Jew and Gentile, but those who live by the Book = Bible, we church people, and those who live by their inner sense of right and wrong, those folks out there.

Understanding God's Word

Read Romans 2:1-11 together. Who is "you" in verse one? In the Greek text, "you" is literally "O man," a fictitious interlocutor in an ancient argument style called a diatribe. The King James Version brings this out clearly: "Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man!" Paul is using an imaginary opponent in a very sneaky way to address those who judge Gentiles, that is Jews, people of the Book, we church Christians.

Applying God's Word

Share how easy and fulfilling it is to judge someone not a part of the Christian community. Feel the satisfaction of condemning someone out there, even if those out there deserve it. The problem with condemning those out there is that we in here are also at fault. We think we are better, more moral, and righteous. We like Pharaoh harden our hearts and refuse to hear the intent of the Gospel, that the goodness of God, giving us the Bible, is meant to lead us to repentance, to self-examination and turning.

Witnessing God's Word

What do we do with such a self-condemning indictment from Paul? The truth is that we all judge others, especially we church folk. How do we stop this? A daily Examen helps, when at the end of the day we examine how we fall short of God's glory. This is also echoed in Alcoholics Anonymous 10th step, "Continued to take personal inventory and when we were wrong promptly admitted it."