

TROUBLE IN RIVER CITY
ROMANS 2:1-11

BIG IDEA: GOD'S JUDGMENT IS JUST AS TOUGH ON BELIEVERS AS ON UNBELIEVERS (ACTUALLY IT'S TOUGHER!)

INSIGHT #1: HYPOCRITICAL JUDGMENT INCREASES MY OWN GUILT (VERSES 1-3)

INSIGHT #2: HARSH JUDGMENT IS INCONGRUOUS WITH GOD'S KIND HEART (VERSE 4)

INSIGHT #3: DIVINE JUDGMENT IS UNINFLUENCED BY FAVORITISM (VERSES 5-11)

VOCABULARY CHECK:

- To JUDGE: *KRINO*—To judge, to decide
- JUDGMENT: *KRIMA*
- CONDEMNATION: *katakrino*—To condemn
 - **John 12:47-48** *"As for the person who hears my words but does not keep them, I do not judge him. For I did not come to judge the world, but to save it. ⁴⁸ There is a judge for the one who rejects me and does not accept my words; that very word which I spoke will condemn him at the last day.*
- HYPOCRISY: *Hypocritas*-- strictly actor, stage player; figuratively in the NT, as a moral or religious counterfeit hypocrite, pretender, dissembler
 - *Rare is the person who can weigh the faults of others without putting his hands on the scales. (author unknown)*
 - **Ambrose Bierce:** *A Christian is one who believes that the New Testament is a divinely inspired book admirably suited to the spiritual needs of his neighbor.*

**INSIGHT #1: HYPOCRITICAL JUDGMENT INCREASES MY OWN GUILT (VERSES 1-3)—
OR, DON'T DIG YOURSELF IN ANY DEEPER.**

VERSES 1-3, *You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. ² Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. ³ So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?*

- This most likely addresses the Jews.
 - *Jews would have agreed heartily with all that Paul has had to say about the Gentile world. They are always ready to condemn the Gentiles, but they saw themselves as on a much higher plane. A Jew could write, "Now therefore weigh in a balance our iniquities and those of the inhabitants of the world; and so it will be found which way the turn of the scale will incline. When have the inhabitants of the earth not sinned in they sight? Or what nation has kept thy commandments so well?" (2 Esdr.3:34-35). (Morris, 107)*
 - Verse 1, *have no excuse=without reasoned defense*

DISCUSSION: WHAT IS IT ABOUT HUMAN BEINGS THAT WE DEMAND THE BENEFIT OF THE DOUBT, BUT WE ARE QUICK TO BELIEVE THE WORST ABOUT OTHERS?
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- This is NOT a flat-out prohibition on judging.
 - **Interpret verse 1 via verse 3.** I have no business judging someone for something I also am doing myself.
 - In fact, this is a universal infuriator.
 - WHAT'S GOOD FOR THE GOOSE [GENTILE] IS GOOD FOR THE GANDER [JEW]
 - *Practice what I preach, not what I do.*
 - It is anti-truth.

- **The world** seeks to silence the moral voice of God's people by misquoting **Matthew 7:1**, *Do not judge, or you too will be judged.* Read the rest of the paragraph.

Matthew 7:1-6 *"Do not judge, or you too will be judged. ² For in the same way you judge others, you will be judged, and with the measure you use, it will be measured to you. ³ "Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye?" ⁴ How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye. ⁶ "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.*

- One source I saw this week called this the **11th commandment**.
- It is a prohibition against hypocritical judging (**verse 5**, *You hypocrite!*).
- It offers the **qualifications** for righteous judgment (**verse 5**, *first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*)
- It **assumes the ability to judge the condition of a person's soul** (**verse 6**, *"Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and then turn and tear you to pieces.*)
- **Passages that teach righteous judging:**
 - **Galatians 6:1-2** *Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently. But watch yourself, or you also may be tempted. ² Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.*
 - **Matthew 18:15-17** *"If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over. ¹⁶ But if he will not listen, take one or two others along, so that 'every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.' ¹⁷ If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector.*
 - **John 7:20-24** *"You are demon-possessed," the crowd answered. "Who is trying to kill you?" ²¹ Jesus said to them, "I did one miracle, and you are all astonished. ²² Yet, because Moses gave you circumcision (though actually it did not come from Moses, but from the patriarchs), you circumcise a child on the Sabbath. ²³ Now if a child can be circumcised on the Sabbath so that the law of Moses may not be broken, why are you angry with me for healing the whole man on the Sabbath? ²⁴ Stop judging by mere appearances, and make a right judgment."*
- Sometimes I don't even know if I am being hypocritical!
 - **1 Corinthians 4:3-5** *I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court; indeed, I do not even judge myself. ⁴ My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me. ⁵ Therefore judge nothing before the appointed time; wait till the Lord comes. He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men's hearts. At that time each will receive his praise from God.*
 - **C. S. Lewis:** *The sins of the flesh are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual: the pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of bossing and patronizing;...the pleasures of power, of hatred. For there are two things inside me, competing with the human self which I must try to become. They are the Animal self, and the Diabolical self. The Diabolical self is the worst of the two. That is why a cold, **self-righteous prig** who goes regularly to church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute.*
 - **FUNDAMENTALISM:** *Too little fun, too much damn, and too little mental.*

DISCUSSION: LET'S DEVELOP A TICK-LIST OF CRITERIA FOR BEING A GOOD JUDGER?

DISCUSSION: HOW DO WE EARN THE RIGHT TO JUDGE ANOTHER PERSON?

- **THE CONFRONTATIONS OF JESUS:**
 - **How Jesus treated the common man:**

- [W]hen messed-up sinners came to the only sinless person who ever lived, he did not merely endure them with patient resignation. He genuinely liked them. (Ortberg, *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them*, 101)
- **John 3:16-18**, "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. ¹⁷ For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him. ¹⁸ Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because he has not believed in the name of God's one and only Son
- Acceptance is an act of the heart. To accept someone is to affirm to them that you think it's a very good thing they are alive. (Ortberg, *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them*, 101)
- **How Jesus treated the self-righteous Jewish clergy:**
 - See below: The Seven Woes of Matthew 23.

INSIGHT #2: HARSH JUDGMENT IS INCONGRUOUS WITH GOD'S KIND HEART (VERSE 4)—OR TREAT PEOPLE LIKE GOD TREATS PEOPLE.

VERSE 4, *Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness leads you toward repentance?*

- **Krastos**—Kindness, more accurately=goodness of heart
 - **Contempt**=despises God's kindness, treats it as of no account. (Morris, 112)
- **Tolerance**=a temporary truce, not a permanent peace—God gives sinners an interval to repent.
- **Patience**=long-tempered (*makrothumia*)
- **2 Peter 3:9** *The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.*
- **James 2:12**, Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!
- **Lee Strobel**...is fond of quoting the reply Homer Simpson's fundamentalist neighbors gave when Homer asked them where they had been: "We went away to a Christian camp. We were learning how to be more judgmental."

Then Ortberg asks, *Where is that camp, and why is it so well attended?* (In John Ortberg, *The Life You've Always Wanted*, 1997, 40)

- **Anne Lamott**: *You can safely assume you've created God in your own image when it turns out that God hates all the same people you do.*
- **There go our ungodly neighbors!**
- **Philip Yancey** tells a story he heard from a friend: *A prostitute came to me in wretched straits, homeless, sick, unable to buy food for her two-year-old daughter. Through sobs and tears, she told me she had been renting out her daughter—two years old!—to men interested in kinky sex. She made more renting out her daughter for an hour than she could earn on her own in a night. She had to do it, she said, to support her own drug habit. I could hardly bear hearing her sordid story....*

At last I asked if she had ever thought of going to a church for help. I will never forget the look of pure, naïve shock that crossed her face. "Church!" she cried. "Why would I ever go there? I was already feeling terrible about myself. They'd just make me feel worse." (In Ortberg, *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them*, 97)

DISCUSSION: WHAT VISIBLE BEHAVIORS WOULD HELP "HYPOCRISY-PROOF" THE CHURCH IN THE EYES OF A WATCHING WORLD?

- **HINT**: *Today we are in a unique position in church history: We have a generation of Christians who believe the historically accepted orthodoxy while adopting lifestyles which deny the very truth they embrace. They sincerely believe one thing, but live another. The divorce rate among Christians is the same as among non-Christians. Alcoholism and sexual abuse are as prevalent within the church as without. Materialism is at an all-time high, and the "wealth and health" gospel commands a strong following. Meanwhile, personal discipline is at an all-time low. All of this and more has caused the church to lose its credibility as a significant force in American life.*

Many regard Christians as people locked in a commitment to an irrelevant way of life—a way of life they don't even exhibit themselves.

If we don't want to be a casualty, we must put on the breastplate of righteousness. Which means we had better quit playing fast and loose with the Christian disciplines and the commands of Christ. We had better stop saying, "What can I get away with?" and start saying, "What would Jesus do?" We had better stop crying "legalism" and start crying "righteousness. (Max Anders, *The Good Life*, Word, 1993, 255)

INSIGHT #3: DIVINE JUDGMENT IS UNINFLUENCED BY FAVORITISM (VERSES 5-11)—OR DON'T EXPECT A "GET OUT OF JAIL FREE CARD" FROM YOUR HEAVENLY FATHER

VERSES 5-11, *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ God "will give to each person according to what he has done." ⁷ To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸ But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. ⁹ There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; ¹⁰ but glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹¹ For God does not show favoritism.*

- **Verse 11**, favoritism= made up of two words meaning "to receive" and "face." It thus signifies giving someone a gracious reception, but in the New Testament it is always used in the bad sense of showing partiality or preferring someone without good reason. (Morris, 121)
- **Verse 5**, Revealed
 - Dr. John Hannah: When you get to heaven there are three things that will surprise you: 1) Who's there, 2) Who's not there, and 3) That you're there!
- **Judgment** is the payment of what is due (Morris, 116)
 - **Verse 6**: Quotation from **Psalm 62:11-12** *One thing God has spoken, two things have I heard: that you, O God, are strong, ¹² and that you, O Lord, are loving. Surely you will reward each person according to what he has done.*
 - **Two** classes of the judged:
 - Those doing good:
 - "The reward of eternal life, then, is promised to those who do not regard their good deeds as an end in themselves, but see them as marks not of human achievement but of hope in God. Their trust is not in their good works, but in God, the only source of glory, honour, and incorruption." (Barrett quoted in Morris, 116)
 - Eternal=lit., pertaining to an age, i.e., the age to come (Morris, 117). Thus includes unending, but also involves quality of life.
 - Those who are self-seeking:
- **1 Peter 4:17-18** *For it is time for judgment to begin with the family of God; and if it begins with us, what will the outcome be for those who do not obey the gospel of God? ¹⁸ And, "If it is hard for the righteous to be saved, what will become of the ungodly and the sinner?"*
 - **Cf. Amos 3:1-2** *Hear this word the LORD has spoken against you, O people of Israel-- against the whole family I brought up out of Egypt: ² "You only have I **chosen** of all the families of the earth; therefore I will punish you for all your sins."*
- **James 2:1-13** *My brothers, as believers in our glorious Lord Jesus Christ, don't show favoritism. ² Suppose a man comes into your meeting wearing a gold ring and fine clothes, and a poor man in shabby clothes also comes in. ³ If you show special attention to the man wearing fine clothes and say, "Here's a good seat for you," but say to the poor man, "You stand there" or "Sit on the floor by my feet," ⁴ have you not discriminated among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts? ⁵ Listen, my dear brothers: Has not God chosen those who are poor in the eyes of the world to be rich in faith and to inherit the kingdom he promised those who love him? ⁶ But you have insulted the poor. Is it not the rich who are exploiting you? Are they not the ones who are*

dragging you into court? ⁷ Are they not the ones who are slandering the noble name of him to whom you belong? ⁸ If you really keep the royal law found in Scripture, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing right. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, you sin and are convicted by the law as lawbreakers. ¹⁰ For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. ¹¹ For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," also said, "Do not murder." If you do not commit adultery but do commit murder, you have become a lawbreaker. ¹² Speak and act as those who are going to be judged by the law that gives freedom, ¹³ because judgment without mercy will be shown to anyone who has not been merciful. Mercy triumphs over judgment!

- In fact, judgment is increased by family status:
 - **Luke 12:47-48** *"That servant who knows his master's will and does not get ready or does not do what his master wants will be beaten with many blows. ⁴⁸ But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.*
 - **James 3:1** *Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly.*
 - A great man cannot commit a small sin.
 - Very good idea that you are alive.
 - I don't spank the neighbor kid.
 - Check Ortberg: *Everybody's Normal Till You Get to Know Them*
 - In Romans 2:3, the *you* is emphatic, i.e., *Do you think that you of all people will escape...?* (Morris, 111)

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