

Sermon Notes

Romans 2:1-16 – “How to Repent”
A Sermon Series on Romans (February 26, 2017)

Introduction – Repentance

- 1) How do you get people to repent?
- 2) For repentance is a critical component of the Christian life.
 - a) As Paul states in our sermon text; **Romans 2:4** – “*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?*”
 - b) Or our banner: “*Repent, Believe, Follow – in Christ*”
 - c) Which is the theme and organization of Romans 1-8 and many other Gospel passages.¹
 - d) And repentance comes first.
- 3) There is the initial repentance when one first comes to Christ. Acts 2:38; 3:19; 8:22; 11:18
(Sometimes called “*the repentance onto life*” from Acts 11:18)
 - a) This can be dramatic, or slowly over time, or even from birth. Acts 9:1ff; 2Tim 3:14
 - b) The dramatic one isn’t somehow better, what is critical is one has repentance.
 - c) Nor should you be sad if repentance comes late Matt 16:17; Acts 16:14; John 1:12-13; Eph 2:8;
in life, for it’s all by God’s sovereign grace. Phil 1:29; 2Tim 2:25; Heb 12:2; 1Pet 1:3,21
- 4) There is a lifelong call of repentance. 2Cor 7:9-10; 2Tim 2:25; Heb 6:1
 - a) Christians are called to constantly turn away from the world, sin, Satan, and the self, and remain faithful unto Christ.
 - b) As Paul famously put it in **Romans 12:2** – “*And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.*”
- 5) But what is repentance?
 - a) It is not just feeling “sorry.”
 - i) Being sorry that you got caught isn’t repentance.
 - ii) Or saying “sorry” to make things better isn’t repentance, either.
 - iii) Judas “*felt remorse*” for betraying Christ, but there was no repentance. Matt 27:3
 - b) Real repentance is about being ashamed of sin Jer 8:6; 31:19; Jonah 3:10;
and turning away from it. Matt 11:21; Luke 10:13; 17
 - i) The NT words for “*repentance*” literally mean “*change of mind.*”
 - ii) The focus is less on emotion (though that can happen) and more on direction of the mind; to literally turn away from sin and to Christ.
 - iii) So repentance is knowingly and willfully claiming Ps 51; Is 59:9-18; Prov 24:32;
one’s sinful state before a holy God and turning away Is 46:8; Luke 24:47;
from sin, Satan, self and the world and to Christ. Rom 1:18-3:23; Eph 2:1-3

¹ For other texts that follow the “repent-believe-follow” formula see: Ps 107:17-19a, 19b-20, 21-22; Mark 1:15a, 1:15b, 16-17; John 3:9-13, 14-18, 19-21; John 6:36, 37-65, 66-69; **Rom 1:18-3:20; 3:21-4:25; 5:1-15:33**; 1Cor 6:9-10, 11, 12; Eph 2:1-3, 4-9, 10; Titus 3:3, 4-7, 8.

- 6) Please note, those who have truly repented still wrestle with sin and are called to constantly to grow in repentance and faith. Luke 17:5; Acts 16:5; 2Cor 10:15; Gal 5:22; 1Thes 3:2; 2Thes 1:3

Repentance in Romans

- 1) Paul's great desire is for the Roman Christians to grow in faith. Rom 1:11-12; 12:2
 - a) Thus he wants to preach the Gospel to them, both in his epistle, and his desire to visit the church in Rome. Rom 1:10,15-17
 - b) A secondary purpose is to heal and bring unity between any division between Jewish and Gentile Christians. Rom 1:5,13-14,16; 2:9-10,14,17,24,28-29
 - i) They both see the world as "us" and "them."
 - ii) For the Jews, it is "the Jews" and everyone else, "the Gentiles."
 - iii) For the Gentiles, it is "the Greeks" and everyone else, "the barbarians."
 - iv) Note how Paul brings the two groups together by using their positive term to describe themselves: Thus it is "Jews" and "Greeks."
- 2) To bring about repentance and faith Paul masterfully employs ancient rhetorical practices in Romans by carefully guiding his audience through this beautifully crafted epistle.
- 3) This can be seen by following the pronouns:
 - a) **Romans 1:1-5** = In the first person (I, we); Where Paul establishes his apostolic authority.
 - b) **Romans 1:6-17** = In the second person plural (you'll); Where Paul graciously and generously states how loved are all the saints in Rome in Christ.
 - c) **Romans 1:18-32** = In the third person plural (they, them, "those people"); Describing how terribly fallen is man and under God's wrath. That though everyone knows God, fallen man is so deluded that they hate God and love their sin.

Romans 2:1-6 = Hypocrites

- 1) Paul now flips into the second person singular (you).
 - a) Not in the sense of only one person, but anyone who is in this group.
 - b) Example: "You (singular) who practice these things."
- 2) Paul is now speaking to anyone who might practice the sins listed in Rom 1:18-32, though they rightfully condemn them.
 - a) You are therefore without excuse. Rom 2:1
 - b) "*For in the way you judge, you will be judged*" Matt 7:2
 - i) Do you rightly condemn murderers (1:29), fine, do you engage in idolatry (1:23)?
 - ii) Do you rightly condemn homosexuality (1:26-27), fine, are you arrogant (1:30)?
 - iii) Do you rightly condemn those who hate their parents (1:30), fine, do you lack understanding in the ways of God (1:31)?
 - iv) Do you claim to know the ordinances of God, and do not practice them (1:32)?
- 3) For we (believers in God) know God will judge those who do evil. Rom 2:2
- 4) But do you think, oh hypocrite, that when you judge others, and do the same thing, you will escape God's judgment? Rom 2:3

- a) Do you not know that when you speak about the kindness, tolerance and patience of God it should bring about your repentance? Rom 2:4
- i) Not just “I’m not perfect” or “yes I have made a few mistakes.”
- ii) But you turn your mind completely way from yourself, sin, Satan and the world and to Christ.
- b) For those of you who refuse to repent because of your stubbornness then you are just building up wrath for the day when God will judge. Rom 2:5
- 5) Paul then quotes a famous passage of Scripture. Rom 2:6
- a) God “*will render to each person according to his deeds.*” Ps 62:12; Prov 24:12; Matt 16:27
- b) This is intuitive; everyone (Jew & Greek) gets this on some level.
- c) Of course the guilty and hypocrites will be judged.

Romans 2:7-9 = But is everyone a hypocrite?

- 1) To those who might not yet get it, and think they are not hypocrites, Paul goes along.
- 2) It’s true; God will not judge those who are righteous.
- a) Again, that is intuitive, both for Jews & Greeks.
- b) If one perseveres in doing good then glory and eternal life. Rom 2:7,10
- c) But those who are selfish, do not obey the truth, then tribulation, distress and evil. Rom 2:8-9
- 3) While going along, Paul lays the foundation for a critical doctrine: That everyone (Jews & Greeks) are under the same law of God.
- a) The Jews might think that the faith is only for them, and the Greeks are irrelevant.
- b) The Greeks might reject the Jewish Scriptures (i.e. the Old Testament) as merely from a backward culture, or that they will not be judged by all those religious laws in the Old Testament.
- c) Many moderns think the same: God will not judge non-Christians by biblical standards.
- d) Paul sets about rejecting this.

Romans 2:10-16 = Everyone (Jew & Greek) is under God’s Law

- 1) All, both Jew & Greek, will be judged. Rom 2:9-10
- a) The Jews do come first, because they alone have received the oracles and revelations of God. And the Messiah will come from the line of David. Rom 3:1-2; 9:4-5
Rom 1:1-5
- b) But the Greeks too are under the law.
- 2) Why? Because there is no impartiality with God. Rom 2:11
- a) The Almighty will judge everyone by the same standards.
- b) Which intuitively makes sense.
- 3) Therefore any transgression of the law will perish, no matter whether Jew or Greek. Rom 2:12
- a) To merely hearing the Law, i.e. the Jews, makes you right. Rom 2:13
- b) But of course the doers of the law will be justified. Rom 2:14

- c) Again, this is intuitive.
 - i) Merely knowing about the laws of the state of Connecticut doesn't make you right.
 - ii) But obeying the laws make you justified before law enforcement.
- d) The Gentiles (note the use of "Gentile" instead of "Greek," Paul is explaining things to the Jews) do not have the advantage of the Scriptures, but instinctively know right and wrong, because they are made in the image of God and have "*the Law written in their hearts.*" Rom 2:14-15
- 4) At the end, everyone will be judged by the Father through Christ, when the secrets of men will be revealed. Rom 2:16

Conclusion

- 1) So, how do you bring about repentance?
 - a) Simple, by proclaiming the Law (i.e. the do's & don'ts of God), which is intuitive, whether to Jew or Gentile, believer or unbeliever.
 - b) But you have to correctly preach the Law, showing how impossible it really is.
 - i) Why? Because it gets at how terrible is our fallen state (which isn't intuitive). We are all hypocrites.
 - ii) If you think you are basically okay, then you don't need repentance.
 - iii) This is why the Law is our tutor, to drive us to Christ. Gal 3:24-25
- 2) Everyone agrees that hypocrites are terrible (Rom 2:1-5),
 - a) And we agree that we should be judged by our deeds (Rom 2:6-16).
 - b) The real problem is delusion; we don't realize how guilty we are (Rom 1:18-32).
 - c) Paul is carefully, masterfully, bringing this out in Romans 1:18-3:23.
 - d) To leave us with only one option: Jesus Christ (Rom 3:21-8:39).
- 3) We will be judged by our works as Romans 3:6 teaches? Yes, we will!
 - a) Even the New Testament clearly teaches there will be a judgment of works at the end of the age. Matt 16:27; John 5:29; 1Cor 3:13; 2Cor 5:10; Eph 6:8; Col 3:25; Rev 2:23; 20:12-13; 22:12
 - b) The standard is simple perfection. Matt 5:48; 22:37b-40
 - i) If by your works, you hypocrites, then onto condemnation.
 - ii) Or trusting in Christ's perfect work credited to us, which is by faith alone,² onto life.
 - c) All those NT texts about the judge of works, do not speak about our works, but remaining faithful in Christ's work (the New Covenant); both His perfect obedience to the Law and His work on the cross credited to us.
 - d) Not that faith is a work, but we are continuing trusting in Christ's work credited/imputed to us, which stimulates us to do good works. Eph 2:1-10; Titus 3:3-8

² Matt 3:15; 5:17-18; John 15:10; Rom 3:21, 22; 5:19; 10:3; 1Cor 1:30; 2Cor 5:21; Gal 4:4-7; Phil 3:9; Heb 10:7-9; 1Pet 2:24; 3:18; 1John 2:2.