

2 Samuel 12:1-10 (Opening)

¹ And the LORD sent Nathan to David. He came to him and said to him, "There were two men in a certain city, the one rich and the other poor. ² The rich man had very many flocks and herds, ³ but the poor man had nothing but one little ewe lamb, which he had bought. And he brought it up, and it grew up with him and with his children. It used to eat of his morsel and drink from his cup and lie in his arms, and it was like a daughter to him. ⁴ Now there came a traveler to the rich man, and he was unwilling to take one of his own flock or herd to prepare for the guest who had come to him, but he took the poor man's lamb and prepared it for the man who had come to him." ⁵ Then David's anger was greatly kindled against the man, and he said to Nathan, "As the LORD lives, the man who has done this deserves to die, ⁶ and he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity."

⁷ Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says the LORD, the God of Israel, 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul. ⁸ And I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your arms and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah. And if this were too little, I would add to you as much more. ⁹ Why have you despised the word of the LORD, to do what is evil in his sight? You have struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and have taken his wife to be your wife and have killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. ¹⁰ Now therefore the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'

Sometimes, I hate being an adult.

Seriously, when you're a kid, you really don't have to make any big decisions. But as an adult, you're making decisions all day long. And not just little decisions; big ones. Do I get out of bed now, or wait a few minutes? Do I go to work or call in sick? Can I afford to get that new car? Can I afford **NOT** to get that new car?

Well, maybe those aren't all big decisions.

But we, as adults, have to make decisions all day long. We're constantly deciding what to do.

The problem with being an adult isn't just making decisions; it's making **good** decisions.

Good decisions are sometimes hard. You may have to think about the decision for a long time. You may have to study the problem, look at all the alternatives, weigh the evidence you've collected, and then finally decide.

But some decisions we make based on lots of experience. Crossing the street is a good example. We learn, as kids (hopefully), how to estimate the speed of on-coming traffic, and based on their distance from where you are, determine if it's safe to cross the street or not. Or, sometimes, we just step out in the crosswalk and trust that the person in the oncoming car will obey the law and stop while you cross the street. That may or may not be the best decision.

In order to make good decisions, you need to have built up enough experience or evidence on that particular subject. That experience or evidence becomes the basis of how we make those decisions. Once we have enough evidence built up, we can say that we have good judgment regarding that particular decision process.

Good judgment is being able to make the right decision based on your past experiences or the past experiences of other people. It's stored up knowledge that we use to live our lives.

So, since we make decisions every day, you could say that we judge every day. Not like the guy who wears that long black robe in the court room, but we judge, we make judgments, all the time.

Hopefully, I've set the stage for you to consider what Paul is saying in Romans 2:1-11. Paul just finished writing about those sinful people who are outside of God's law, and outside of God's grace; those gentiles who haven't accepted the gift of grace. He used lots of words to describe all the evil things that they do, and how they have no excuse for not worshiping God, because they can see His blessings and handiwork everywhere they look.

So, now let's look at Romans 2:1-11.

Romans 2:1-11

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. ² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. ³ Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? ⁵ But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

⁶ He will render to each one according to his works: ⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, he will give eternal life; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury.

⁹ *There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek,* ¹⁰ *but glory and honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek.*
¹¹ *For God shows no partiality.*

Paul turns the pointing finger around and points it right at the person who is shaking that finger at those sinful gentiles who have no excuse. Paul is telling these people that they are doing the exact same thing that they are judging others for. That sounds familiar. It sounds to me that Paul takes the words of Jesus from Matthew 7:1-5 and uses them to make his point.

Matthew 7:1-5

¹ *“Judge not, that you be not judged. ² For with the judgment you pronounce you will be judged, and with the measure you use it will be measured to you. ³ Why do you see the speck that is in your brother’s eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? ⁴ Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? ⁵ You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother’s eye.*

It bothers me when people take Matthew 7:1 and say that Jesus said not to judge other people. That’s not what he’s saying at all. The kind of judging both Jesus and Paul are talking about was not a common sense appraisal of character based on a person’s conduct but a hypocritical and self-righteous condemnation of the other person. We evaluate people, things, and situations all the time. Evaluation is not the same as condemnation. Condemnation involves imposing a sentence on someone. That’s not our place.

On top of that, Jesus continues in Matthew 7 by telling us to evaluate or judge people based on their actions. Just look a little further down in Matthew 7:15-20.

Matthew 7:15-20

¹⁵ “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing but inwardly are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶ You will recognize them by their fruits. Are grapes gathered from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ So, every healthy tree bears good fruit, but the diseased tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A healthy tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a diseased tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus you will recognize them by their fruits.

How do you judge if someone is a false prophet or not? By their fruits; what does a person produce? If you see someone doing good things, and professing Jesus, then you can probably judge that they are Christians. If you see someone who professes Jesus and constantly is doing things that you know God wouldn’t approve of (that is, sin), well, maybe you should talk to them about that. That’s what Paul tells the church in Galatia to do, in Galatians 6:1-5.

Galatians 6:1-5

¹ Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. ² Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ. ³ For if anyone thinks he is something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. ⁴ But let each one test his own work, and then his reason to boast will be in himself alone and not in his neighbor. ⁵ For each will have to bear his own load.

Paul is telling us to help each other out; when you see a brother or sister going down the wrong path, go get them and help them with their problems; help them back on the path. But be careful not to fall into the same problems that you’re helping them out of.

Back in the letter to the Romans, we see Paul trying to impress on his readers that they are just as much in need of grace as the people we talked about over the past two weeks; those gentile pagans who do every sin imaginable. They do all those evil things, but we're no better than they are. We sin, too; and sin is sin, no difference between any of them.

The Jews thought that since they were children of Abraham, they had a special pass into heaven; that because they had the Law of Moses, they were good to go, as long as they kept the sacrifices and the holy days. Paul's pointing out to them, and everyone else who does good things but still sins, that they're all just as bad off without grace; without accepting the atoning sacrifice of Jesus, they're just as lost as those who are outside.

Can we escape the judgment of God by obeying the Law of Moses? Paul says the answer to that question is "No!" If the Law of Moses could save us, Jesus wouldn't have had to die for our sins, but the writer of Hebrews put it very clearly in Hebrews 10:1-10

Hebrews 10:1-10

¹ For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. ² Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? ³ But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴ For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

⁵ Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

*“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;
⁶ in burnt offerings and sin offerings*

you have taken no pleasure.
⁷ *Then I said, 'Behold, I have come to do your will, O God, as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.'* ”

⁸ *When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹ then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰ And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

Later in Romans, Paul will explain that the Law of Moses shows us what sin is, that we sin, and that we don't even come close to living up to what God wants us to do. The Law convicts us, just like in a court room today. We are convicted of a crime if the judge finds enough evidence of our guilt. We all deserve punishment for sinning.

Paul spends the last four verses of our scripture for today talking about how God will render His judgment; what our sentence will be. But I want to look at a similar passage, one that tells us what it will be like, with the words of the Son of God himself. Let's look at Matthew 25:31-46.

Matthew 25:31-46

³¹ *“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. ³² Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. ³³ And he will place the sheep on his right, but the goats on the left. ³⁴ Then the King will say to those on his right, ‘Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵ For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and*

you came to me.’³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink?’³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you?’³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

⁴¹ “Then he will say to those on his left, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.’⁴² For I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me no drink,⁴³ I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not clothe me, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’⁴⁴ Then they also will answer, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to you?’⁴⁵ Then he will answer them, saying, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’⁴⁶ And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

I seem to remember a verse from a song that we would sing sometimes at InterVarsity meetings at college.

Don't wanna be a goat; nope.
Don't wanna be a goat; nope.
Ain't got no hope.
Don't wanna be a goat; nope.

And that's the gist of what Paul is saying in our scripture for today. I don't want to be a goat, but I can't seem to do what's right! I keep failing. And God is an impartial judge; you can't buy him off.

One thing's for sure; in this situation, I don't want justice, I want mercy and grace. Because justice requires that I must be punished for all my sins. Yes, I've dealt with the consequences of my sins, the earthly

punishment for what I've done, but I know that I deserve eternal punishment for my sins. I deserve to be a goat.

But what makes you a sheep? Well, if you remember, Jesus summed up the Law and the Prophets with two commandments: Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind; and love your neighbor as yourself. But I know that I don't always do that. I fall short of the mark; I fail.

So how can we make it? How can we reach the mark?

Jesus.

In Hebrews 10:10 it says that we are sanctified by the offering of the body of Jesus. The blood of His sacrifice covers our sins. When we "put on Christ", God, the Judge at the final Judgment, only sees His Son, not our sin. Because of His sacrifice, our sins are covered and we are accepted. We get to be sheep.

Like I said, I hate making even small decisions some days. This is a judgment I wouldn't want to have to make. I'm glad I'm not responsible for judging people. Determining someone's final destination is not a task that I would enjoy. Mostly because I know that I make mistakes.

I know God doesn't make mistakes. His decisions are always right, his judgments are always true, and thankfully, his mercy is everlasting. I'm glad I get mercy, not justice.

James 4:11-12 (Closing)

¹¹ Do not speak evil against one another, brothers. The one who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks evil against the law and judges the law. But if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge. ¹² There is only one lawgiver and judge, he who is able to save and to destroy. But who are you to judge your neighbor?