

MEASURE TWICE, CUT ONE

ROMANS 2:1-16

By Pastor John Carlini, D.Mn

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I would like to remind us where we are in the book of Romans, and what Paul's intent is in this section. In verses 16-17 of chapter 1, the introduction, Paul summarized his overall message. He said that the Gospel he preached, the Gospel of Jesus Christ, has the power to change our eternal destinies from death to life. In other words, the good news is that God both desires to rescue us from hell and that He has provided the way for us to be rescued, if we place our faith and trust in the person and finished work of Christ, then we will be saved. That is the overriding Good News.

Now from chapter 1, verse 18 through chapter 3, verse 23, Paul is going to explain why we all need saving; because in ancient Rome, like modern day America, people would naturally say, "Saved from what?"

I know it's going to get a little tricky to preach and for you to follow, because we don't experience a one-to-one correlation to this church in Rome. To be sure, we are a mixed group of people, coming from very diverse backgrounds however Paul has broken down culture in categories that may be hard for us to understand.

As we saw last week, he addressed how the judgment of God was on the outs with out and out Pagans I think we can relate to that. We can look at the sexual perversion, the violence, and all the lawlessness that permeates our culture, and we, like Paul, can easily condemn that.

Next week, we will see Paul address the religious community and here is where it gets very tricky. He will address the Jews as a people and he will demonstrate how being religious can't save us. I guess we could relate to that in children who are raised in the church, just

because they are baptized, or because they may come from Christian homes, and because they come to church and volunteer in the church, that doesn't make them Christians, nor does it guarantee their salvation. Being religious is not equal to being saved.

This morning, we are going to look at a group that falls somewhere between the out and out Pagans, that everybody looks at and says "Yeah, I can see why they'll burn in hell," and the very Religious people that look like they has the inside track to heaven. I'll try to identify this in-between group later in the message this group is characterized by their ability to see right and wrong in other people.

Here is my goal as we study through 1:18-3:23. Paul wants us to feel the full force of 3:23. His point is that all of us have sinned and come short of God's glory. So as we look at each category, we are to identify ourselves, in our natural states, with the sinners described. It's easy to sit back and criticize others, but it's not easy to take that criticism, and apply it to our selves.

One day, a minister and his family were walking along the ocean in Daytona Beach, Florida. Two very healthy girls in very skimpy bikinis passed by when the minister remarked, "How disgusting!" His wife retorted, "If it's so disgusting, why do you keep on looking?" To that, their little twelve-year-old son spoke up and said, "I think Dad likes to be disgusted."

You see, I think it's easy for us to see the bad behavior and attitudes in others, but when it comes to our own behaviors, we are a little blind.

In the building industry, there is a saying, "Measure twice, but cut once." The meaning of that is you should make sure the measurement you made is accurate, because if you cut something too short, you have ruined the materials, and wasted a lot of money it is the same in our spiritual life.

We had better be careful how we judge other people, because Jesus says that the same ruler we use in measuring them, He will use to measure us so the next time we decide to criticize someone, we had better be sure to measure twice, before we cut. Jesus said it best, so I will paraphrase Him; **If we can see clearly enough to remove a small splinter from another's eyes, then surely we out to see clearly enough to take the huge log out of our own.** Now even though this section will deal with a particular group of people, I think we can all use an attitude adjustment in this area?

I. WHOSE RULER ARE WE USING? (Vs. 1-5)

In verses 1-5, we see that when we start to criticize others, or judge others, we need to first ask ourselves, "Whose ruler are we using?" Any of us who have studied advanced science had to convert American measurements to the metric system. Now the metric system is easy to grasp, because it is built on tens, hundreds, thousands, etc. however, the conversion is not so easy. When you have tools that are built on the American measurement of inches, feet, and yards, and are faced with working on bolts that are metric, it can be very frustrating that all the sizes are off just enough to make the work impossible but, God's measuring system is a lot easier. Here is the moral of this measuring story: **When we recognize bad behavior in others, our attention should be drawn to the bad behavior in our own lives.** Did you get that? When we see something in someone else's life that bothers us or irritates us, our first instinct is to talk about them, or to let them know however, the proper action is to keep our mouth shut and examine our own lives to see if we can find this same type of troublesome behavior in us.

A. AN IMPROPER USE OF A RULER (V. 1)

Verse 1 describes the use of an improper ruler. In order to identify this group of people that Paul is talking about, we need to understand that he is using a common philosophical tool of

the Greeks, which is called a diatribe. The writer, or the speaker, addresses an imaginary opponent or student, and then carries on a debate with him. Paul does this several times throughout the book of Romans and I think it is almost impossible to catch the sense of this in English but let me try to give you a sense of it. Paul is saying, “Therefore, mister, missy, ... I’m talking to you, the one who judges others, you have no defense.” Or it could be something like “Hey buddy, Mr. Judge, you’re without excuse.” Literally the Greek says, “Therefore, you are without excuse/defense, the man, all the judge.”

So whom is he talking to? There is a lot of debate over this section because most modern day scholars think Paul is talking to the Jews. The scholars’ argument is that for the Jew, the world was divided into Jews and non-Jews; Jews and Gentiles, if you were not a Jew, you were a Gentile.

However, other scholars say that the Jews also recognized a sub-category of Gentiles that they referred to as “God-fears” in other words, there were moral people out there that recognized right from wrong, and tried to live good lives.

Again, like I have consistently done so far in our study through Romans, I am going to take a strong, positive stand, I think they are both right. Let me explain; as I said before, Paul addressed the total moral bankruptcy of the out and out Pagans last week and next week he will discuss the very religious people. Now I think I can demonstrate that throughout the rest of the Bible, there is a group in the middle and it draws from both sides. From the non-religious side, there seem to be good people who are trying to do right. Don’t we all have non-Christian friends who are good people; in fact some of them tend to live even better lives than some Christians we know. And from the other side, there is what Paul refers to as “Carnal Christians” they are in the church, but they don’t take their faith very seriously. Also from this side are people who grew

up in Christian homes attended church all their lives, even do a lot of work in the church, but really don't have a personal love relationship with Jesus.

I want you to feel the flow of Paul's message. He has just criticized the lifestyle of people living according to prevailing culture. He said that all the sexual perverts, the violent, evil, drug taking, drug selling, corrupt politicians, and evil business people, are condemned and headed for hell and to that, the moral, upright, good people, people like you and I stand up and cheer, "You preach it Paul, you tell them."

But then Paul seems to turn on us and says, "Well, if you're able to recognize the evil in them, then how can you possibly defend the evil in your own lives? If you are able to judge them as evil, and understand that their proper destination is hell, then you ought to be able to understand that is your fate as well," to which we gasp and ask, "How can that be?"

Paul's argument is this; we have the right ruler, but are measuring the wrong people. The ruler was given to us by God to measure ourselves but we would immediately argue, "I'm not a sexual pervert, I'm not committing adultery, I'm not fornicating and I'm not molesting children" but have we forgotten the other characteristics of the godless? Are we greedy, jealous, do we criticize others, are we proud loud, and arrogant or do we gossip? Let me quickly refresh our memories. Paul said these depraved, evil lifestyles come from three basic attitudes; lack of fear of God, lack of contentment, and lack of humility. Here is the problem we often just look at behavior, and not at what drives the behavior. We can all look at evil dictators in foreign governments, and identify them as evil. We look at politicians, and they are easy targets as well but did you ever stop to think about what it is that drives them? For the most part, they are proud and arrogant they lack humility and lack the sense of fear of God.

But when we gossip, when we criticize someone, when we judge someone, laugh at someone, or make fun of someone, do we realize that is the same pride, arrogance and lack of fearing God that is behind those behaviors as well? When we call someone stupid, we should immediately become afraid, remember when we point the finger at someone, there are three fingers pointing back at us. So we do have the right ruler, but we have to make sure we are measuring the right person.

B. USING THE WRONG RULER (Vs. 2-3)

Verses 2-3 describe someone using the wrong ruler. The point here is, I'm not the ruler, nor are you. Let's remember that last week God judged the wicked because of their idolatry and it is their idolatry that led them to immorality and God's judgment was twofold. The first part of the judgment was that he handed them over to their own deluded thinking, and degrading lifestyle. Secondly, they were headed for death, and eternal separation from God they would spend eternity in hell. God is the One who measures. The ruler is the truth as revealed in the person of Jesus, the Bible, and in the creation. When we judge, we are actually taking God's job away from Him and we are making ourselves God.

I know there are many of us who have strong opinions and want people to think and act the way we do. We say, "I don't like that. I don't agree with that, people shouldn't do that or think like that." If we find ourselves saying and thinking this way, we had better become a little bit more humble. First of all, not many of us know the Bible well enough and for sure probably most of don't study it enough to make those sorts of comments. Here is a good rule; if you cannot demonstrate your position clearly from the Bible, it's probably better to just plain shut up. So I would expect those of who talk a lot, and those who have a lot of opinions, suggestions, and criticisms, spend a lot of time studying, reading, and memorizing the Bible. Our likes, dislikes,

and opinions, are not legitimate rulers, only the Word of God is a legitimate ruler. Look at the end of verse 3. We are probably safer if we learn to keep our mouths shut and our criticisms to ourselves because the same judgments apply to us. If we insist on playing God, He will turn us over to our own deluded thinking and we will then be headed for eternal destruction. Before we talk about someone else, we had better examine ourselves. I can't tell you how many times I have seen people judge others for behaviors they themselves engage in. It always fascinates me how we can easily recognize human rights violations in other countries and how vocally we criticize them, while at the same time we are guilty of personal, institutional, and governmental racism. How can we see the evils of racism in other countries: and yet we can't see it in our own attitudes and neighborhoods?

Let me give you a political example; let me repeat this yet one more time, I am not a democrat or a republican and I don't vote so you know I have no axe to grind. In the recent news is our reluctance to join and submit to this world court, headed by the United Nations. Now, I am not saying whether or not I agree or disagree with this decision, I merely want to point out how all nations and governments are hypocrites. If Germany and Japan had won the Second World War, President Truman, the senators, representatives, and leading generals would all have been put on trial for war crimes against humanity. They would have been condemned for killing so many innocent people with the atomic bomb.

If Yugoslavia had prevailed against the United States, or if Iraq had prevailed, President Bush and Clinton would have been put on trial for war crimes for all the bombing and destruction of civilians. Yet, because we won, we now want Saddam Hussain brought to trial in a world court. We are judging Slobadan Milosevich in a world court. We are content to bring to trial our enemies in a world court, yet unwilling for ourselves to be judged likewise.

Again, my intent is not to agree or disagree with the policy it is merely to demonstrate that we are all hypocrites. We certainly know when we are wronged, and we want our pound of flesh however, we are not willing to take responsibility for the hurt we have caused others. Remember that we are not the rulers, we are not the judges, and we are not God. Being judgmental of others is in essence trying to be God, and that is idolatry.

C. THE PROPER USE OF THE RIGHT RULER (Vs. 4-5)

Finally, we see the proper use of the right ruler in verses 4-5. We recognize that God just doesn't come down and smoke the whole world, because He is a kind, tolerant, and patient God. He is the God of love that desires all of us to surrender our lives, our love, and our loyalty to Him willingly and it is not that God is passive. You see, when we sin and get away with it, our hearts become hardened. Here is a law of the spiritual universe; we cannot ignore, resist, or walk away from God's laws neutral, or untouched. Ignoring, resisting, or disobeying God is not morally neutral it has consequences. Now we have heard this message loud and clear this morning.

If you are a person who is judgmental, critical, proud, or arrogant, you had better change, and change quickly. Because it is very clear in verse 5 that when we do these things, we are writing our own judgment. Here is the ruler God and His truth is the measure, Jesus is the carpenter and He indeed will measure and cut. There will be no mistake.

Let me give you a quick personal example I discovered in my own life this week. While driving into work, I saw a Mercedes Benz get caught in a lane. He tried to make it into another lane, just barely cutting off another Mercedes Benz. Well the driver, who was cut off, was outraged so he weaved in and out of traffic to catch up to this other Mercedes. When he finally got on the side of the other Mercedes, he threw his coffee out the window at the other guy. Now,

even more indignant, the other Mercedes also weaved in an out of traffic to get along side and when he did, he threw out a whole cup of coffee, cup and all, at the other Mercedes and sped away. My initial reaction was “morons. They are two morons. I would assume if they were coming from Highland Park, and driving Mercedes Benzes, they should be somewhat educated, and should know better. They are Morons.”

So then later, while preparing this sermon I thought more deeply about it. Why did I call them morons? Well, they were unwilling to let a minor infraction go. I’m sure the first guy didn’t intentionally cut the other guy off. So it was a lack of compassion, a lack of willingness to let things go, and secondly, they were educated and should have known better.

Then later that night, Luig and I were sitting in the living room talking. She made an innocent comment, and I responded with a smart-sarcastic remark. Calmly she said, “Do you see why you get in trouble? I say something to you, and you respond like that, that’s why you get into trouble.” So now I’m thinking, “moron. I’m such moron.” First of all, I should know better I teach marriage enrichment classes and I teach premarital classes. I was interpreting what she said in light of perhaps an argument we had in the past that I should long ago have forgiven and forgotten. Do you see that? The same motives, behavior, and thought patterns that caused those two drivers to act like morons were exactly the same attitudes that led to me act like a moron. I hope you get it, because here is the ruler; **when we recognize bad behavior in others, our attention should be drawn to the bad behavior in our own lives.**

II. WHO MEASURES UP? (Vs. 6-11)

I really like this next section because it is somewhat poetic, keep in mind that Paul is addressing people who we would identify as good people. They may not be religious or go to church, but they are good decent people. In verses 6-11, he answers the question, “Who

measures up?” If all of us in the natural state, in which we were born, are headed for an eternity in hell, then is it possible to change our eternal destinies simply by being and doing good? Paul demonstrates that **we should come to realize that none of us could possibly live up to God’s standards.** No one is good enough to live up to God’s measure of righteousness.

A. GOD’S RULER (Vs. 6 & 11)

Now the Hebrews loved to play with word order and structure. In fact their poetry is built on parallel thoughts and word order and these verses are written in a Chiastic structure. The Greek letter “CHI” pictorially demonstrates the reverse order. Can you see how verse 6 and 11 are parallel, 7 and 10 are parallel, and 8 and 9 are parallel? Now usually, the middle section will drive the interpretation so we should look to verse 8 and 9 to give the main message.

Verses 6 and 11 describe how God’s ruler is applied. The message is that God is fair and He shows no favorites and it doesn’t matter whether or not you come from a Christian home, it doesn’t matter if you have religious friends, it doesn’t matter if you belong to a church and it doesn’t matter if you talk or act religious none of these things have the power to change our eternal destinies.

B. A GOOD MEASUREMENT (Vs. 7 & 10)

Verses 7 and 10 describe a good measurement. Now those of you who diligently study your Bibles, will say “Hold on, isn’t Paul contradicting himself here? Didn’t he say earlier, and later, that salvation only comes from faith and not from good works?” This is what I think is going on, and keep in mind the verse that summarizes this whole section, that is that all have sinned, and all fall short of God’s glory. Keep in mind in this section that he is addressing good people and he is describing two possible outcomes; there will be rewards and punishments. Those of us who think we are good are invited to compare ourselves to the standards of good.

Look at the descriptions in these two verses. Those who persist in doing good those who seek glory, honor and immortality, will receive glory, honor, and eternal life. Now I would say that does not characterize my life, especially if I compare myself to someone like Mother Teresa. If I take a good, long, honest look at myself, I will immediately see that there is no way I can begin to measure up to Mother Teresa, let alone, measure up to the standard Jesus set. You see, even Mother Teresa would readily admit her inability to live up to God's standards. This is what a good measurement is; if we think at any time that we are good, all we need to do is compare ourselves to Jesus. There can be no doubt left that we cannot come close to His level of goodness.

C. A BAD MEASUREMENT (Vs. 8 & 9)

Therefore, we are subject to the bad measurement in verses 8 and 9. In lieu of what we said in the first section, and the invitation to evaluate our own thoughts and behaviors, we are forced to admit that we fit the description of verse 8. The word self-seeking is very interesting in the Greek it is used to describe politicians who take public office in order to get rich. It is a word that describes self-interest, selfish ambition, and thinking that has our passions and desires at the center. And as we already said, we are all capable of suppressing the truth when we are able to justify our behavior while at the same time judging others. I don't think it takes a great deal of self-reflection to discover how evil we really are.

The point Paul is making in this section is that none of us measure up to God's standards. If any of us for one moment think that we are a good person, then that perhaps is a sign of God's judgments. He has turned you over to your own deluded thinking. The point here is that if we get what we deserve, we are all headed for eternal destinies in hell characterized by trouble,

wrath, and anger. It is not a pretty picture. **We should come to realize that none of us could possibly live up to God's standards** and that indeed is really bad news.

III. DO I MEASURE UP? (Vs. 12-16)

Finally, in verses 12-16, we are invited to ask ourselves, "Do I measure up?" **Since none of us can possibly live up to God's standards, are we are doomed to hear a guilty verdict come out of God's mouth.**

A. READING THE RULER INCORRECTLY (Vs. 12-13)

Another way to look at all of this is as if we were standing before the throne of God on the final day. To the out and out Pagans we talked about last week, God would pronounce a guilty verdict and to those good people we talked about this morning, they to would also hear God say, "Guilty." In verse 12-13, people often read the ruler incorrectly I think that sometimes this attitude characterizes us who are church people. We somehow have come to think that gaining knowledge somehow saves us and we think if we believe the right things, then we are o.k. However, Paul reminds us that it is not just believing the right stuff, talking the right stuff, or acting like we are made of the right stuff. In reality, it is living the right stuff, from the inside out. The saddest thing for any of us, would be to come here to worship, to hear God speak, and to leave without changing the way we think speak, and behave. We are simply fooling ourselves if we think we are saved. If we leave here this morning thinking there is anything good in us at all, then we are sadly mistaken and we have read the ruler incorrectly.

B. READING THE RULER CORRECTLY (Vs. 14-15)

Verses 14-15 tell us how to read the ruler correctly. The point is that God is the One who reveals Himself to all people. We all know what is right and wrong. When we do right, we agree with God's commands, and when we do wrong, it is a willful disobedience.

C. MAKING THE FINAL CUT (V. 16)

We talked a lot about measurements this morning. Now in verse 16, it's time to make the final cut, we may be able to fool one another in fact, we may be able to fool ourselves however, it is God that makes the final cut. It really doesn't matter how good you think I am, it doesn't matter how good I think I am, it doesn't matter how good I think you are and it doesn't matter how good you think you are.

The point is that God is the judge, and He sees everything. There will be no fooling God. There is nobody who is capable of receiving salvation based on his or her good works and if you think you are good, if you have fooled other people into thinking you are good, ... remember this: God knows everything and if you get to the judgment day with the story on your mouth, "God, I was a pretty good person," be careful, because that will invite God to show you and all of heaven the evil you have done and all the evil & dirty thoughts you ever had. Remember that nothing is hidden from God. Again, lest we walk out of here this morning, totally depressed, and totally hopeless, Paul reminds us of the good news, in the Gospel he preaches. That is, if we come humbly and honestly before God, confessing there is nothing good in us, and that it is only through the death and resurrection of Jesus on our behalf, that is the only hope we have for salvation, then, and only then, can we have confidence in our salvation.

There has to come a crisis point in each of our lives when we have to say, if it is not totally by the fact that Jesus died for me personally, then I am without hope, because there is no way I could ever be good enough to deserve heaven. In fact, if I were to honestly examine my life, I would immediately see that there is still nothing good in me on my own without Christ. Without Jesus in my life, I am totally lost, depraved, evil, and destitute. But with Him, I am alive and acceptable to live in heaven. Here is the bad news Paul wants us to understand this

morning: **since none of us can possibly live up to God's standards, are we doomed to hear a guilty verdict come out of God's mouth.** When we are finally able to judge the behavior of others that indicates how we ought to be able to judge our own behavior. In the words of Jesus, **if we can see clearly enough to remove a small splinter from another's eyes, then surely we ought to see clearly enough to take the huge log out of our own.**

I think if we take time to reflect, and be honest with ourselves, we will see that we really do deserve the anger, wrath, and judgment of God, there is no way around it. Listen to this prank, Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, the author of Sherlock Holmes used to play on his friends.

He used to playfully tell how he sent a telegram to 12 of his friends, all men of great virtue and reputation, each of considerable position in society the message was simply worded, "Free at once, all has been discovered." Within 24 hours, the story goes, all 12 had left the country.

1. For us indeed, all has been found out because God knows everything about us, every little dirty or evil thought.
2. But there is only one place to flee only one place to run and that place is right into the arms of Jesus.
3. I would invite anyone who chooses to receive Jesus, to do so this morning.
4. If you have been fooling yourself into thinking you are good, please leave that thought behind this morning, because it is a lie.
5. Let us pray to God to create new hearts and minds in us.

THE X-IASTIC STUCTURE OF VERSES 6-11

- A. **God "will give to each person according to what he has done."**
- B. **To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life.**

- C. But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.**
- D. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile;**
- E. But glory, honor and peace for everyone who does well: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.**
- F. For God does not show favoritism.**