

DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME II // NO EXCUSE
JUNE 13, 2021

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: What is hypocrisy?

Key Text: *“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.”* (Romans 2:1-5)

Beware of Quick Judgments

A young couple moved into a new neighborhood. One morning while they were eating breakfast, the wife saw her next-door neighbor hanging the laundry outside. “That laundry isn’t very clean. She doesn’t know how to wash clothes correctly. Maybe she needs better laundry detergent.” Her husband remained silent. For the next several days, every time her neighbor hung her washing out to dry, the wife made the same comments. A month later, the wife was surprised to see that her neighbor’s laundry on the line was washed and clean. She said to her husband, “Look, she’s finally learned how to wash correctly. I wonder who taught her.” The husband replied, “I got up early this morning and cleaned our windows.”

In our text, Paul addresses the serious issue of judging others hypocritically. The word Paul uses for “judge” and “judgment” means more than merely analyzing, evaluating, or discerning; the word Paul uses means to condemn, to pass a verdict. Condemning others is the favorite sport of the sanctimonious, the self-righteous.

Paul’s Jewish readers who strictly followed the Law of Moses may have interpreted Paul’s words as applying only to the Gentiles. And Paul’s Gentile readers who followed moral philosophies may have interpreted Paul’s words as pertaining only to other Gentiles. But Paul says to them, “You are all guilty because you all do the same things.” Not only were his readers participating in some of the sins Paul listed in Romans 1, but they were also hypocritically condemning the sins of others.

Discuss: Why is the sin of hypocrisy—condemning others for the same sins we are committing—so distasteful to people?

Discuss: Where do we see hypocrisy occurring in our society?

Discuss: Why is religious hypocrisy in particular so damaging?

In verses 1-4, Paul mentions three characteristics of a hypocritical, self-righteous person.

The hypocritical person accuses others but excuses himself.

“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” (v.1). It is easy to try to downplay our own sin by giving it a different name. For example, gossip may be disguised as a “prayer request.” Having a critical spirit may be labeled as “discerning.” We try to justify poor attitudes or bad behavior by saying, “That’s just the way I am.” The hypocritical, self-righteous person measures people by an unfair standard by recognizing shortcomings in the lives of others but failing to acknowledge their own “blind spots”—areas of weakness that they can’t see in their own lives. They attempt to play God, judging in others what they dislike the most about themselves. God will not allow it to go undealt with: *“We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things”* (v.2).

Discuss: What are examples of labels people use to try to cover up their sin?

The hypocritical person thinks that judging others makes him superior.

“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?” (v.3) We expect God to fully judge others for their sins, but we expect God to judge our sins—the exact same sins we condemn others for committing—on the curve. But Paul asserts that judging others does not mean we’ll escape judgment ourselves. When you point one finger at others in judgment, you have three pointing right back at yourself!

The hypocritical person misinterprets God’s blessings on his life.

“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?” (v.4) The hypocrite always presumes on God’s goodness, taking His grace for granted, believing that he above all others is deserving of God’s blessings despite his sins.

Discuss: How is God’s grace a motivation *not* to sin rather than a license to sin?

The danger of all of this self-righteous hypocrisy is that it results in storing up God’s wrath: *“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”* (v.5). God’s wrath is accumulating, and one day the dam will break upon the hypocrite!

Discuss: How would you encourage a new Christian to avoid the self-righteous hypocrisy that Paul describes in our text?

For Further Study:

The Choice: Hypocrisy or Real Christianity? by Chuck & Nancy Missler

“What Does the Bible Say about Hypocrisy?” article at www.gotquestions.org

“5 Warnings to Hypocrites in the Church” article at www.crosswalk.com