

SOUND DOCTRINE FOR SPIRITUAL SUCCESS – Studies in Romans

The Fatal Flaw of Human Hypocrisy (Romans 2:1-11)

The overarching theme of Romans chapter two consists of Paul's searing diatribe against the hypocrisy inherent in each of us. This chapter serves a two-fold purpose in setting the stage for a lengthy discussion of justification by faith, as well as an important follow-up to his assertions in chapter one. The key to understanding the chapter as a whole is found in vv11-12 –

“For there is no partiality with God. For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law . . .”

A lost and fallen human race is incapable of genuine impartiality, making all of us prone to hypocrisy. On the other hand, the perfect character of God isn't beset with such a fatal flaw. The word hypocrisy occurs nine times in the Greek New Testament, with its counterpart, hypocrite(s) used on eighteen occasions. The word describes someone who is an actor, involved in play acting and engaged in a pretense. It is the epitome of a double standard where an individual says one thing and does another. The connection between partiality and hypocrisy is that of cause and effect. Since we are incapable of true impartiality, it makes us more prone toward hypocritical behavior, in thought, word and deed. Partiality favors one person over another, creating the likelihood of overlooking the wrong-doing of the one we favor. And there is no one we favor more than ourselves; creating the potential for denial and blame-shifting, as well as outright fabrications about our own conduct.

So, Romans 2 serves as a follow-up to Romans 1 in that some of Paul's potential readership in Rome, consisting of unbelieving Gentiles and Jews, would claim innocence in regard to the practices listed in chapter one. Romans 2 also sets the stage for Romans 3 and the doctrine of justification by faith; since after a reading of Romans 2, who could say that they are not guilty of any sin? In light of that coming day when the impartial and almighty Judge of the universe will examine each of us in regard to our behavior, there is no better news in knowing that this Judge, in His mercy, has provided all of us with a way of escape from such a fearsome moment of accountability. If you haven't yet put your trust in Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord, make that decision of faith today. That act of faith must be preceded by a significant change of mind which the New Testament calls “repentance.” That change of mind involves three issues:

- >> You must have a change of mind in regard to your self-awareness. You must see yourself as God sees you: A sinner in need of a Savior.**
- >> You must have a change of mind in harmony with what the Bible teaches as the greatest need of your life: To be forgiven of your sin.**
- >> You must have a change of mind in regard to the Divine person and redemptive work of Jesus Christ. He is God incarnate: God the Son who became God the man. His death on the Cross served as a payment for the penalty of sin. His resurrection from the dead creates an opportunity for all of us to share in His eternal resurrection life.**
- >> With this change of mind in place, you are ready for that act of saving faith in Jesus Christ; trusting Him to be your Savior for the forgiveness of your sin; as well submitting to Him as the Lord of your life; as He progressively changes you into the person He wants you to be.**