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Andrew M. Davis

Sermon Notes

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## **Seeking Glory, Honor, and Immortality**

### **Romans 2:6-11**

Illus. The Coming Judgment of God: A Great White Throne

*Revelation 20:11-12 “Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”*

The question we address today is the central question of your soul: on that great day, will it be eternal life or eternal wrath?

#### **I. Review**

- A. The Gospel of God: Supernatural Power for Complete Salvation; KEY: “The Righteousness of God.”
- B. The Wrath of God: God’s Passionate Response to Evil
- C. The Central issue: Exchanging the Glory of God for an Image, the Truth of God for a Lie... Result, 21 Evils
- D. Last Week: Warning Against Hypocrisy, Showing Contempt for the Kindness, Tolerance and Patience of God... storing up wrath for the day of wrath

#### **II. God’s Righteous Judgment, Principle #1: Judgment According to Deeds (vs. 6-10)**

- A. According to Deeds: The Fact Established

**vs. 6 “God will give to each person according to what he has done.”**

1. Judgment Day: the record of deeds is opened

**Daniel 7:9-10** *“As I looked, “thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. <sup>10</sup> A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened.”*

2. Consistent teaching: judgment “according to works”

**Revelation 20:12** *“The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books.”*

**John 5:28-29** *“Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice <sup>29</sup> and come out—those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned.”*

**2 Corinthians 5:10** *“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.”*

B. The Crucial Issue: Eternal Life or Eternal Wrath

1. How to have life, vs. 7, 10

**vs. 7** *“To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life.”*

**vs. 10** *“...but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good”*

2. How to have wrath, vs. 8-9

**vs. 8** *“But for those who are self seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil...”*

3. These principles are true for everyone

**vs. 9, 10** *“first for the Jew, then for the Gentile...”*

4. Summary:

God gives eternal life to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality

God gives eternal wrath to those who reject the truth and follow evil

C. Massive Problem: Does this teach salvation by works?

Interpretive Problem: "Do these verses teach a true way to heaven or just a hypothetical way?"

1. What is NOT in question: justification BY works

***Romans 3:28 For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from observing the law.***

***Romans 4:5 However, to the man who does not work but trusts God who justifies the wicked, his faith is credited as righteousness.***

***Romans 5:1 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ***

2. What IS in question: How do these verses fit in Romans 2? Two basic interpretations:

a. Some interpreters (John Stott): hypothetical way to heaven

- if we could truly obey the Law, it would be a valid way to heaven
- nobody ever does
- nobody "persistently does good"
- nobody properly yearns for glory, honor, immortality
- nobody obeys the Law

***vs. 13 "For it is not those who hear the Law who are righteous in God's sight, but those who obey the Law who will be declared righteous."***

***3:20 "Therefore, no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the Law..."***

- THEREFORE: this is just speaking hypothetically

b. Others see it differently:

- Justification NOT because of works

Key: justification is NEVER “on the BASIS” of works... God sees your deeds and says “This will justify you for all the sins you’ve committed.” Good works can NEVER pay for our sins

- Judgment (assessment) ACCORDING TO works

RATHER: Paul is teaching that our **judgment** is ACCORDING TO works... God will be able to judge your whole life accurately by what you do

- Good deeds always come from true saving faith

Luther: “I teach justification by faith alone apart from works, but the faith which justifies is NEVER alone! It always produces good works.”

***Romans 1:5 “I received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the Gentiles to the obedience which comes from faith.”***

3. Why this is NOT hypothetical

- it doesn’t LOOK hypothetical (Greek has ways of making something hypothetical)
- centrality of repentance

***vs. 4 “God’s kindness leads you towards REPENTANCE...”***

***vs. 5 “Because of your stubbornness and UNREPENTANT heart you are storing up wrath against yourself...”***

If perfect obedience to the Law was in view, why does Paul talk about repentance??

- other verses

***Romans 6:22 “But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves to God, the benefit you reap leads to holiness, and the result is eternal life.”***

***Romans 8:13 “If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body you will live.”***

***Galatians 6:7-9 “Do not be deceived, God cannot be mocked. The one who sows to please the sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life. Let us not become weary in doing good...”***

D. Central Exhortation: Seek As God Commands

1. What to seek?

***“... seek glory, honor, immortality”***

a. glory = our perfection in God

***Romans 8:17 “Share in Christ’s glory” vs. 18 “the glory that will be revealed in us.”***

b. honor = our praise from God

***1 Cor. 4:5 “At that time, each will receive his praise from God.”***

c. immortality = our permanence before God

2. Should we seek these?

***Jeremiah 45:5 “Should you then seek great things for yourself? Seek them not!”***

a. seeking these things seems selfish

b. we should not want these great things for ourselves

**C.S. Lewis, “Weight of glory”**

“If you asked twenty good men today what they thought the highest of the virtues, nineteen of them would reply, Unselfishness. But if you asked almost any of the great Christians of old he would have replied, Love. You see what has happened? A negative term has been substituted for a positive... The negative ideal of Unselfishness carries with it the suggestion not primarily of securing good things for others, but of going without them ourselves, as if our abstinence and not their happiness was the important point. I do not think this is the Christian virtue of Love. The New Testament has lots to say about self-denial, but not about self-denial as an end in itself. We are told to deny ourselves and to take up our crosses in order that we may follow Christ; and nearly every description of what we shall ultimately find if we do so contains an appeal to desire.

If there lurks in most modern minds the notion that to desire our own good and earnestly to hope for the enjoyment of it is a bad thing, I submit that this notion has crept in from Kant and the Stoics and is no part of the Christian faith. Indeed, if we consider the unblushing promises of reward and the staggering nature of the rewards promised in the Gospels, it would seem that Our Lord finds our desires not too strong, but too weak. We are half-hearted creatures, fooling about with drink and sex and ambition when infinite joy is offered us, like an ignorant child who wants to go on making mud pies in a slum because he cannot imagine what is meant by the offer of a holiday at the sea. We are far too easily pleased.”

**We should drive ourselves daily to seek glory, honor, immortality... this should be the consuming desire of our hearts**

c. we are far too easily pleased, and far too weak after the things of God

- If Christianity is a road to travel, most of us “stroll”... we should RUN THIS RACE WITH ENDURANCE
- If Christianity is a voyage to be made, most of us “drift”... we should PUT ON ALL THE SAIL (“Flying cloud”, setting the clipper ship record from New York to San Francisco)
- If Christianity is a flight, most of us are like drifting leaves floating in the air... we should have the passion of lemmings who fly across the Atlantic Ocean

Our seeking is too weak, our hunger and thirst is too weak, our urgency is too weak

We MUST seek glory, honor, and immortality day after day

3. How should we seek them?

***vs. 7 “To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality, he will give eternal life.”***

- a. persistence in doing good
- b. day after day... fighting sin nature, fighting world system, pouring yourself out for the glory of God and the building of the Church
- c. “doing good” = obeying the law of God; loving God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength, loving neighbor as yourself

4. How should we NOT seek?

***vs. 8 “But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”***

- a. “self-seeking”... breaking two great commandments: no love for God, no love for neighbor, just an immediate gratification in this earthly realm
- b. “reject the truth” What truth??
  - There is an eternal and powerful God (Romans 1:21)
  - There is a Law from this God (Romans 2:14-15)
  - There is a righteous decree from God that those who do evil deserve death (Romans 1:32)

- Ultimately, they reject the truth of the Gospel

**2 Thessalonians 2:10** *“They perish because they refused to believe the truth and so be saved.”*

- c. “follow evil”... consistently doing those things that conscience and God’s law condemn as evil

### III. God’s Righteous Judgment, Principle #2: Judgment Without Favoritism (vs. 11)

**vs. 11** *“For God does not show favoritism.”*

A. Jew and Gentile alike come under judgment

**vs. 9-10** *“There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; but glory, honor, and peace for everyone who does good, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”*

1. Jew has no advantage over Gentile on judgment day
  - a. some Jews would have refuted this
  - b. all you need to do is be a descendent of Abraham
  - c. Paul is refuting this as did John the Baptist before him

**Matthew 3:9-10** *“And do not think you can say to yourself, ‘We have Abraham as our father.’ I tell you that out of these stones, God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire.”*

- d. consistent message: it’s not those who are physically descended from Abraham, but those who do the works of Abraham
2. Greek word for favoritism: “face-receiving”
    - a. superficial, knee-jerk judgment
    - b. simply quickly looking at the face... “Oh, you’re a Jew... you’re in!!”, “Oh, you’re the Queen of England... you’re in!” “Oh, you’re one of the downtrodden poor of the earth... you’re in!!”
    - c. God NEVER looks at the face... he looks at the fruit as it comes from the heart
    - d. Jesus’ enemies had it right!!

***Matthew 22:16 “Teacher, we know that you are a man of integrity, and that you teach the way of God in accordance with the truth. You aren’t swayed by men since you pay no attention to who they are.”***

- Jesus constantly went for the heart
- Rich young ruler, Jesus goes for the heart
- Poor people, Jesus went for the heart
- Rulers, Roman governors, Pharisees, prostitutes, children... Jesus paid no attention to their status in life but went for their hearts

That is how Judgment Day will be... no partiality, no favoritism, no bribery accepted, no special deals... just a perfect judgment of the fruit of your life and what it shows about your heart

3. Jesus, the perfect judge of fruit

Illus. Persian rug, expert inspection

***Matthew 12-34-36 “Out of the overflow of the heart, the mouth speaks. The good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him, and the evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in him. But I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted and by your words you will be condemned.”***

## IV. Summary and Application

### A. Summary

1. Judgment Day is coming
2. Eternal life or eternal wrath awaits everyone
3. Judgment is “according to works”
4. Good works NEVER cleanses us from sin
5. BUT Christ is able to use the fruit of our life to judge the state of our hearts

6. Persistence in doing good for the purpose of seeking glory, honor, and immortality results in eternal life
7. Selfish, fleshly evil-doing results in wrath and anger
8. Judgment will be without favoritism, not looking at the face

## B. Application

### 1. Look to Christ and Christ alone

- Our good deeds can NEVER pay for our sin... Christ's blood shed on the cross ALONE cleanses on judgment day
- Ask Christ to produce in you the works He wants from you

***John 15:1-2, 5 "I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful.... I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing."***

- His cloak of righteousness covers your sin, ALSO produces inside you the fruit He will demand on Judgment Day

***John 3:21 "Whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God."***

### 2. Be persistent in doing good

- Arise every day to be a servant of Christ for the storing up of good deeds
- Walk in the good deeds God has planned for you today

***Ephesians 2:10 "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to walk in them."***

- FIGHT your sin nature and the surrounding Satanic world system to do those good deeds... by PERSISTENCE in doing good

### 3. Seek glory, honor and immortality

- Glory = our perfection in God
- Honor = our praise from God

- Immortality = our permanence before God
- SEEK = be deeply hungry for these things, day after day... don't stroll, RUN... don't coast, DRIVE; don't float, SAIL with the wind!!