

DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME II // NO PARTIALITY
JUNE 20, 2021

GRACE
FELLOWSHIP

Discussion Starter: What kinds of actions would you expect to see from a genuine follower of Jesus?

Key Text: *“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.” (Romans 2:6-11)*

In our previous lesson (Romans 2:1-5), Paul sharply reminded his readers that God will not tolerate hypocrisy—condemning others for sins that we, too, are guilty of committing. In today’s text (Romans 2:6-11), he emphasizes that God alone has the right to judge others—to “*render to each one according to his works*” (v.6).

Eternal Life for Those Who Live for God

Paul describes the person who is living by faith for God as doing well by patiently pursuing what is God-glorifying, God-honoring, and eternal (v.7). We do not work in order to be saved, but as evidence that we are already saved, and we belong to Christ.

The renowned French artist Paul Gustave Dore was traveling in Europe when he faced a predicament. He reached a border crossing and discovered that he had misplaced his passport. Even though Dore tried to convince the customs officer of his identity, the officer wouldn’t allow him to pass without his papers. Finally, Dore was given a test to prove his identity—the official gave him a piece of paper and a pencil and requested he draw a group of nearby people. Dore did so with such ease that the official was convinced he was indeed the famed artist—Dore’s identity was affirmed through his work. Similarly, people can identify us as Christ-followers through our God-honoring work for Christ. Jesus said, “*Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.*” (Matthew 5:16)

The Christian’s God-focused works will be profitable to himself when God judges him (v.7). Eric Liddell, a dedicated Christian, was a member of the 1924 British Olympic team. But when he was informed that his race was to be run on a Sunday, he refused to compete. He was offered the chance to run in a different event which was not on a Sunday. He won that race and received the gold medal. Eric later became a missionary in China and died in a Japanese prison camp during World War 2. At his death, a Scottish newspaper reported: “Scotland has lost a son who did her proud every hour of his life.” God will recognize that Eric Liddell pursued His glory and honor and render to Liddell according to his works at judgment. And God will do the same for us.

Discuss: What do you think living for God’s glory and honor looks like in daily life?

Wrath and Fury for Those Who Live for Self

In stark contrast to the Christian living for God, Paul writes these terrifying words for the person living for himself: *“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”* (v.8-9). People who live only to follow their own unrighteous desires will suffer severe judgment from God.

Teacher and author Jon Scieszka wrote a revision of the popular story of the *Three Little Pigs* from the wolf’s point of view. In Scieszka’s clever book *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*, the wolf outlandishly claims that he never intended to have pork for dinner—he was simply wanting to borrow a cup of sugar for his grandmother’s birthday cake, but he was tricked by the three pigs. And the wolf claims he was sneezing, not huffing and puffing when the pigs’ straw house just happened to collapse. Scieszka’s books went through several printings and made the list of bestselling children’s books because children and adults alike—all familiar with the true story of the three little pigs—were captivated by the wolf’s twisted reasoning and could see through the wolf’s deceptions.

Paul assures his Roman readers that God will render to evil men according to the true dessert of their evil deeds. Their twisted reasoning may be able to fool some of the people some of the time, but they cannot fool God any of the time.

Discuss: What do you think living for self (instead of for God) looks like in daily life?

There is no reaping without sowing or sowing without reaping.

Paul’s words in Romans 2:6-10 remind us of his words in Galatians 6:7-8: *“Do not be deceived: God is not mocked, for whatever one sows, that will he also reap.”*⁸ *For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.”* Paul lays open our future based on what and how we sow. There are consequences to each action—everything we do carries both temporal and eternal weight. The sinner’s actions will turn on him and become an unbearable burden, but the Spirit-directed life of the Christian will return with *“glory, honor, and peace”* (Romans 2:10). With eternity in mind, we must choose between the flesh and the Spirit: *“Let the evildoer still do evil, and the filthy still be filthy, and the righteous still do right, and the holy still be holy”* (Revelation 22:11). A person cannot choose the one without leaving the other: *“If the Lord is God, follow him; but if Baal, then follow him”* (I Kings 18:21). Because of God’s grace, we can choose and sow godliness and reap life everlasting.

Discuss: How would you encourage a new Christian to sow to the Spirit and not to his own flesh?

For Further Study:

Loving God by Charles Colson

“What Does it Mean That a Man Reaps What He Sows?” article at www.gotquestions.org