

Romans 33

Judgement of God Part 01

Romans 2:1-5, *Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. ² But we know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. ³ And do you think this, O man, you who judge those practicing such things, and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? ⁴ Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? ⁵ But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,*

Romans 2:1-16 are a single section and gives us the principles on which God judges men.

Romans 1:18-32, that God's wrath is revealed in judgment, and that God has revealed His wrath in judgment against the sinful pagan world because the sinful pagan world is guilty of rejecting His revelation and then of descending into idolatry and horrifying vice.

Men abandon God and God abandons men to the consequence of their own sin, and thus the wrath of God is at work.

A very important question that is unanswered.

What about the good people?

The people who are not murderers, liars, thieves, fornicators, adulterers, and homosexuals.

Where do they fit?

Many moral people, basically outwardly good people, would probably agree with Paul's condemnation of the godless pagan world in chapter 1.

They would probably say, "Amen" to Paul.

We agree with you.

There are in the world and throughout its history some basically moral people.

There are in the world people who do not appear to be idolatrous. They may even identify with that religion which is true.

In Paul's day, they would be the Jews. They would be professing Christians, who would want to uphold the moral standard of the Scripture. Because they are not true believers in God, though they want to uphold an external moral virtue value system, they cannot maintain it in their own lives because they cannot restrain their own sinfulness. So, they cover a really darkened heart with a cloak of light.

Paul in chapter 2 sets about to expose the moralist, to expose the Jew.

We have not become idolatrous; we have not sunk to this level. We agree with your condemnation therefore, we are different than they are. We stand un-condemned.

They would have a false sense of security.

Romans 3:19, *Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.*

The whole basis of the Christian gospel is only understood insofar as people understand that they are guilty before God, whether they are the immoral man of chapter 1 or the moral man of chapter 2, whether they are the Gentile of chapter 1 or the Jew of chapter 2.

Paul in chapter 2, may have had the heathen moralist in mind, the man who thinks he is moral and wants to uphold a moral/ethical code.

But more than that, he had the Jew in mind. The Jew would hurriedly agree with Paul's condemnation of the Gentile world, and the Jew would then state that he himself knew that he was exempt from any such judgment, and they really believed that they were exempt.

The Jew traditionally believed that God was going to blast the heathen out of existence because of their sin. As in the case of Jonah, He would wipe out the Nineveh's of the world, unless they repented.

Paul also believed that no Jew would ever experience that kind of condemnation with the pagans. They believed that because they were Jewish, born into the line of Abraham, because they were circumcised and because they kept the trappings of the Jewish religion, that they were exempt from any judgment.

They who are the seed of Abraham according to the flesh shall in any case, even if they be sinners and unbelieving and disobedient toward God, still share in the eternal kingdom.

That is what they believed. They believed they were exempt from judgment. They did not believe they would be condemned with the world, because they were self-righteous, and they were attached to the nation of Israel.

They believed in a salvation by works.

They believed in what we would call legalism – salvation by works.

They thought that they were exempted because they were in the nation, kept the traditions, physical identification, religious identification together, and chosen people.

They expected to be regarded and treated not as individuals, but they expected only to be dealt with as far as the whole nation was concerned. They thought God was obligated to the whole nation, so they as a part of it were exempt from judgment.

So, there was no consequence to their personal sin at all because they were under a sort of a national salvation.

Salvation by their covenant.

Because they were circumcised on the eighth day, because they went through that ritual therefore, they were in the covenant.

What is being believed in many Protestant churches today?

That if a child is baptized as an infant, that is a sacramental act by which that child enters into the covenant.

The child enters into the covenant as an infant, that entering into the covenant is confirmed when the child is 12, and therefore, by sacramentalism that child is guaranteed a place in God's kingdom and will not be condemned with the world.

So that that covenant theology that we see today is basically an adaptation of the false securities given through the Jews from their teachers who missed the whole point.

So, they believed that by keeping the traditions outwardly and by being sacramentally attached to the covenant, they were exempt.

They have been baptized, they go to church, they belong to a church, they keep the rules, and they act on a moral basis outwardly. They are self-righteous, they try to do what is right, and they just do not think they are going to be judged. They really do not.

The moral, self-righteous people are the hardest people to reach. They are much harder to reach than the reprobates who hit the bottom and have no other options.

Paul points out that the ethical/moral person, even the Jew, is going to find himself in the same hell as the Gentile pagan idolater if he keeps going the way he is going.

If the heathen is without excuse, then the Jew is even more without excuse because he has more information and more knowledge.

So, when it comes to the moral man, when it comes to the religious person who has not become an idolater but who has identified with Judaism or in today's terms with Christianity outwardly, Paul wants him to know that he is going to be judged.

From Romans 2:1-16 we can derive 6 principles of God' judgement.

1. Knowledge,
2. Truth, and
3. Guilt,
4. Deeds,
5. Impartiality, and
6. Motive.

1. Knowledge.

V 1, *Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.*

It begins with "therefore."
Backwards to the previous chapter.

Why?

Because they also know the truth.

How do they know the truth?

Because they are judging others.

Criteria in which they judge others prove that they must know the truth.

They are just as inexcusable.

Obviously, they knew the truth. It was clear that all men knew the truth from chapter 1, and what was true of those people is also true of the Jew in chapter 2. They knew not only from external natural revelation, but they also knew from conscience.

Romans 2:14, *for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves,*

The Gentiles do by nature the things contained in the law, and if it's the nature of a Gentile, if conscience is a part of him, then conscience is a part of a Jew as well.

If conscience is in an immoral man, conscience is also in a moral man.

So, they also knew by natural revelation, they also knew by conscience, but more than that, the Jew, the moral man, the one who attaches himself to the worship of the true God, knows from the very law of God itself.

Romans 3:1-2, *What advantage then has the Jew, or what is the profit of circumcision? ² Much in every way! Chiefly because to them were committed the oracles of God.*

So, they knew, and therefore, they are just as inexcusable or more inexcusable for they not only have the light of nature, but they also have the light of conscience, and they have the light of the revealed Word of God itself.

Romans 9:4, *who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises;*

They have all the benefits and the revelation.

Anybody, not only the Jew but beyond to any moralist who thinks he is exempt from judgment because he has not sunk to idolatry, and homosexuality.

Little phrase "O man" is used also in V 3 and later in chapter 9.

Inexcusable!

Why?

Because you have the knowledge.

The Jews who would be exposed to this chapter would even have known of Christ, and that would put them at the very top of the inexcusable list.

The **Hebrews chapter 10** people who would receive the much severer punishment because they had counted the blood of the covenant an unholy thing and trampled underfoot the blood of Christ.

How do we know?

They portray that they know God's standards when they apply them to somebody else. Anyone who sits in the seat of moral judgment, anyone who sits in the seat of condemning others for their sin, proves that he himself is inexcusable.

If he can judge sin in others, then it gives evidence that he knows the standard.

Romans 1:32, *who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.*

The pagans know the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death. Even the pagans know what is right and wrong. Even the pagans could apply God's standard to their own life if they chose, much more you who have received His revelation.

This would be like a judge who condemns a criminal by applying the law. He, therefore, makes himself responsible, obviously, to keep that same law if he is going to sit in judgment on somebody else.

V 1, *Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.*

When you show the law of God as applied to somebody else, you prove that you know that law, and in knowing that law you condemn yourself.

A very powerful statement.

You condemn yourself.

Matthew 7:1, *Judge not that you be not judged."*

What this means is do make a proper evaluation?

Matthew 7:15-20, *"Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. ¹⁶You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? ¹⁷Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. ¹⁹Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰Therefore by their fruits you will know them.*

Make a decision based upon the fruit that you see in someone's life. But what it means here is stop criticizing, stop being condemning and fault-finding and self-righteous.

Stop playing God.

Matthew 7:2, *For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the measure you use, it will be measured back to you.*

If you show that you can judge everybody else, then you show that you ought to be judged by that same standard.

If you know it so well to apply it to other people, you better make sure it is not going to be applied to you.

James 3:1, *My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.*

Why is a teacher's condemnation greater?

Because the more he knows, the more he therefore condemns himself.

Matthew 7:3-5, *And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye? ⁴Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; and look, a plank is in your own eye? ⁵Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye.*

The Jew who sat in judgment on everybody and thought he himself was exempt, and God says, "You are not exempt. Not only are you not exempt, but you are also even more inexcusable. You prove it because you are applying the law to somebody else, which proves you know it, and it is going to condemn you, too.

Why should it condemn them?

V 1, *Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.*

You are doing the same things.

Like the rich young ruler, "All these things have I done from my youth."

Matthew 5:21-22, *"You have heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder, and whoever murders will be in danger of the judgment.' ²²But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.*

You do not kill outwardly, but you kill with your heart. You are able to restrain the actual murder because you're seeking so hard to be self-righteous. Because you want everyone to look up to you, but inside you are a murderer, so it may not be apparent.

That is all that false religion can do. It cannot restrain the sin in the heart, although it can mask it with a self-righteousness.

Certain people in the cults can appear to be so good. Because they are restrained by the desire to gain heaven by their works. They are restrained by the desire to be thought of as righteous, but the fact is, inside they cannot control any of those things.

Matthew 5:27-28, *You have heard that it was said ¹¹to those of old, 'You shall not commit adultery.'* ²⁸ *But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.*

You are able to restrain it on the outside to perpetuate your hypocrisy, but not on the inside.

Matthew 5:31-32, *"Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'* ³² *But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery.*

When they wanted to commit adultery, they did not just go commit adultery, they divorced their wife and married the one they wanted to commit adultery with, and they legalized it.

That is why the Lord says when you are putting away all your wives, you are flourishing adultery all over.

They were technically getting around adultery, but they were divorcing their wife to do it and that is a sin.

Verse 33: "And again your rabbis have said, 'Thou shalt not perjure thyself but make sure you perform all your oaths.'" And you know what they had done? They had all these kind of oaths, and they'd say, "I swear by such-and-such" and "I swear by such-and-such," and as long as you swore by something other than God, it didn't count, and when you said "I promise and I swear by heaven that I'll keep this and I'll pay my debt," then you didn't pay your debt, you could say, "Ha – I swore by heaven, it doesn't count." So you're going along and you're trying to perform your oaths, you're doing the letter of the law on the outside, but you're a liar on the inside.

And then in verse 38, He says, "Your rabbis taught you an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth." You know what the rabbi said? "Get your vengeance, man, get your vengeance, get it. If somebody does something to you, you do it back, and you say it's biblical, an eye for an eye, tooth for a tooth." But that statement was for the law courts, not for personal activities. We have laws to take care of that. "And I tell you that when somebody hits you on one cheek, turn the other in your personal relationships." You see, you've missed the whole point. You're vengeful sinners.

Now, He went all the way through chapter 5 with that stuff, and as I said, they could restrain the outside, "Oh, we don't kill." "Oh, we don't commit adultery." "Oh, we don't lie, we just say 'King's X,' see, we have our fingers crossed behind our back, and we only do what the Bible says, an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth," which was nothing but a cloak for their revenge. You see, self-

righteous people make two fatal mistakes. They misunderstand the height of God's law that encompasses even the inside and they misunderstand the depth of their sin. They miss both of those.

So the logic of our Lord is clear and convincing. You who condemn others prove that you know the law, and in your knowledge of the law, you condemn yourselves because you are doing the same things. The conscience that makes you aware of wrong in others writes your own sentence. Pretty devastating, isn't it? To the self-righteous, religious Jew and the moralist, He says you're just as bad as everybody else, you're just covering it up on the outside, and God will judge on the basis of knowledge.

So the guy who comes along and says, "Man, I'm certainly not in Romans 1. Whew, I don't do that. I'm a basically good guy. I don't live that kind of a horrible life. I'm moral, I'm religious, I go to church, I've been baptized, I'm in the class." And maybe, for whatever reason or another, restraining, but in the inside is unrestrained evil and you'll be judged for it, and you're not exempt because you're attached to Israel and you're not exempt because you're attached to the church.

Second principle of judgment, this is the principle of truth – of truth. Verses 2 and 3, "But we are sure," says Paul, "that the judgment of God is according to truth against them who commit such things" the same things that are in verse 1, which are the same things that are in chapter 1. We are sure – oidamen – we know – and the word here, the Greek word for know means to know something that is commonly known, that is patently obvious, that is known by external facts – I mean it is an obvious, basic principle that judgment of God is going to be according to truth. Why? Because God cannot what? Lie. And God is of truth, that's His nature. Shall not the judge of all the earth, says the Pentateuch, do right? We'll be judged according to the truth.

In chapter 3 verse 4: "Let God be true but every man a liar." God is true. That is His nature to be true, and He will judge everything with truth. In 9:14, Paul said, "Is there unrighteousness with God? God forbid." God never does anything that isn't right. God never makes any evaluation that isn't correct, and if you go back into the Old Testament again and again and again, the truthfulness of God's nature is referred to. In Psalm 9, there's a great statement in verse 4: & nbsp; "For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou didst sit on the throne judging right." Verse 8: "And He shall judge the world in righteousness."

There's also a great word in Psalm 96 verse 13, "Rejoice before the Lord for He cometh to judge the earth. He shall judge the world with righteousness and the peoples with His truth." God will judge according to the truth. Now, there may be distortion in our perception, but there is no distortion in God's perception. Nobody is exempt. God is going to look at it, God is going to see what is the truth, and God is going to judge on that basis. In Psalm 145:17, it says, "The Lord is righteous in all His ways and holy in all His works." And that has to do with His works of judgment as well as any other works.

I was just thinking of a verse in Isaiah, if I can find the right one – yes, 45:19, “I have not spoken in secret in a dark place of the earth. I said not unto the seed of Jacob, ‘Seek ye Me in vain.’ I, the Lord, speak righteousness, and I declare things that are right.” See, God doesn’t do anything wrong. He doesn’t make any wrong evaluations. There is distortion in the human world, not in God’s.

See, as I said earlier, there is something in us that wants to tend to exonerate us all the time, right? “Oh, God would never do that.” “Oh, I’m basically a good person.” “Oh, it’ll all be all right in the end, it’ll all work out.” Listen to me. We are so used to mercy that we trade on it. We are so used to God not killing us when we sin that we expect not to be killed. Yet the Bible says the wages of sin is what? Death. Every time you sin, God has a perfect right to snuff your life out. But we are so used to mercy, that instead of seeing it for what it is, we abuse it, you see. “No, He’s not going to kill me for that. It’ll be all right.” And He is so gracious. But instead of us, out of love, being grateful for His graciousness, we tend as human beings to trade on it and distort the perspective.

Look at 1 Corinthians chapter 4, and I think Paul gives us a good word in verse 3. I’m going to say more about what I just said, too, either tonight or next time. I’ve got a feeling it will be next time. But in verse 3 of chapter 4 of 1 Corinthians, Paul says, “With me it is a very small thing that I should be judged by you or by man’s judgment. I don’t even judge myself.” Now, that is a marvelous admission. Paul is saying, “Look, it is not even an issue with me to be judged by men because I am well aware that man’s judgment is hopelessly distorted, that he cannot properly make an evaluation, that he does not make the right judgment because man lacks the knowledge of the truth.”

He does not perceive truly other people and he does not even perceive himself. Paul even says, “I don’t judge myself.” “For when I know nothing against myself” – in verse 4 – “when I can’t even find anything wrong with me, that doesn’t justify me, it just shows my inability to see the truth. It is God who judges me. Therefore, I judge nothing before the time when the Lord will come and bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the heart.”

Man’s judgment does not square with the facts, but God’s does, and the problem with the moralist, you see, is the moralist thinks he is okay because, as Paul said to the Corinthians later, he is judging himself by himself. Listen to Hebrews chapter 4 verse 13: “Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in His sight” – listen to this one – “but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do.” Oh, man, does that put us in a vulnerable place? Every sin you have ever committed, you might as well have committed on a full-sized screen in front of God. Every evil thought we have ever thought, every evil word we have ever spoken, every evil deed we have ever done has been done in full presence of God’s awareness. And you know what He thinks about sin? He hates it, and we keep doing it right in front of Him.

“Seeing then that we have a great high priest, Jesus the Son of God,” and then he goes to say, “Let’s come boldly.” In other words, if we know we’re exposed to God, then we’d better run to the one who can mediate between us and God, right? The Lord Jesus. God’s judgment is not predicated on outward appearance, it is not predicated on profession, it is predicated on the real truth. Frankly –

and this might give you a little insight, the hope of a hypocrite – the hope of a hypocrite is that God will judge him by something else besides the truth. That is the hypocrite's hope. If you're sitting in this church and you've never really given your heart to God and you've never come to Christ but you're just kind of playing the religious game and you want to act religious and make people think you're religious and you're a part of the whole system, your basic hope is that you're not ever going to be judged on the truth but that you're going to be judged on the lie you're living. But you won't.

You see, the hypocrite does not want to be judged by the reality of what he is, he wants to hide behind – in the case of the Jew – his national identity or his church affiliation or his baptism or his rule-keeping or his morality or the fact that he's a quote/unquote "good guy." But man looks on the outward appearance, 1 Samuel 16:7 says, and God looks on the heart and He judges by knowledge, and if He does, then verse 3 follows: "If God judges on the proper basis of knowledge and truth, thinkest thou this, O man, that judges them who do such things and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God?" You think you're going to get away? When God judges on the basis of the truth and on the basis of your knowledge and you show your knowledge because you judge others and God knows you do the same thing you judge others for doing, you think you're going to escape when they're not? Guess again.

Now, that's preaching to the conscience, folks. That's to the quick. That's a direct hit, personal application because the moralists and the Jews think they're going to escape, and there are people today who go to the church, they may go to a Lutheran Church or a Presbyterian Church or a Baptist Church or the Catholic Church or an Episcopalian Church or whatever kind of church, and they think they're going to escape, and they may sit in judgment on an immoral world while in their heart they're just filled with the same stuff, they're like whited sepulchers on the outside, inside full of dead men's bones.

And then he says, "Do you think" – and he uses the word *logizomai* – "Do you estimate or are you of the opinion or are you calculating that you're going to get away when it's obvious to God that you must know the rules because you're condemning them in others and here you are doing the same thing?" It's kind of interesting – the intensity of that verse is lost in the English. Dr. Barnhouse was commenting on this verse, and I thought he made a marvelous commentary, he said, "This is my translation: 'You dummy, do you really figure that you have doped out an angle that will let you go up against God and get away with it? You don't have a ghost of a chance. There's no escape. Do you understand that? No escape. This means you, the respectable person sitting in judgment on others and remaining unrepentant to yourself for the evil in your heart. You dummy.'"

You will not escape. That last little phrase, "you will not escape," tells us about the moralist. Number one, he cannot avoid being judged. Number two, when he's judged he will not be able to avoid being condemned, and number three, when he's condemned he will not be able to avoid being executed.

Many years ago, one of the early Christian writers said, "He cannot escape by his own judgment. How can he escape the judgment of God? If forced to condemn ourselves, how much more will the infinitely holy condemn us?"

In 1 John 3:20 – and I’m going to just close with this point. We won’t go on to the third one, although it’s tremendous. But 1 John 3:20 says what I just said. Listen to this. “Beloved, if our heart condemn us, God is greater than our heart and knoweth” – what? – “all things.” I mean if our conscience is self-condemning, can you imagine how condemning God must be with an infinitely holy knowledge of everything? You know, God has built in us a conscience. Conscience is like pain. Pain calls you to a halt when your body’s being injured, and conscience calls you to a halt when your soul is being injured. Conscience does the same thing pain does in the spiritual dimension, and if our conscience lets us know that we’re evil, if our conscience condemns us and our conscience is a part of our fallenness, can you imagine how God must condemn us, who is unfallen and eternally and infinitely holy? And so what he’s saying in verse 3 is: “Do you think you, of all people who know God’s law and condemn it in others, do you think you can break it and miss judgment?”

Look at Hebrews chapter 12, and I’ll close with this passage. Hebrews 12:25. And really, we’ve talked about hypocrisy tonight, haven’t we? “See that you refuse not him that speaketh, for if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth, but now He hath promised, saying yet once more, I shake not the earth only but also heaven, and this word yet once more signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear for our God is a consuming fire.”

Now, what is he talking about? The comparison is with Israel at Mount Sinai, and he says they didn’t escape when they refused to hear him who spoke on earth, when they refused to hear the voice of God that thundered out of the mountain of Sinai. They didn’t escape. That whole nation died in the wilderness, and if they didn’t escape when God spoke from earth, when God speaks the gospel from heaven, do you think you’ll escape when you don’t accept it? How much greater judgment when God speaks from a heavenly throne than when He spoke from an earthly mountain. Our God will judge for He’s a consuming fire.

In chapter 2 he says, “If the word spoken by angels was steadfast” – and that refers to the Mosaic law given at Sinai – if the law of Moses given by the angels was steadfast and every transgression and disobedience received a just judgment. In other words, if God judged those people on the Old Testament level who received the law, how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation which was spoken by the Lord? I mean if they were judged who denied a law spoken by angels, how much more will we be judged who deny a law spoken by Christ Himself who is greater than angels? That’s a very important question.

Only those things which are true about us are known to God. People around us don’t know them. They know some of them, not all of them. You don’t even know all of your innermost motives. For we’re so biased in our own favor that we tend even to make good things out of bad things, but God

knows, and you will be judged on the basis of the truth about you and on the basis of your knowledge. God will judge the moralist on those two bases. That's just two out of six, folks. We haven't got you yet? For sure we'll get you by the time we're done.

You say, "Well, John, what do you do? If I look into my heart and I see in my heart that I'm not right with God, and I know the truth and I'm playing the religious game and I may be condemning the sin in others and knowing that it's all boiling within me and I've restrained it for the sake of my self-righteousness, and I know that God knows it all and when God sees it all He'll send me to hell, what do I do? How do I escape?" There's only one place, and that's to run to Jesus Christ because the Lord Jesus Christ has already paid the penalty, hasn't He? He's already received the judgment of God.

Fred Barshaw gave me a story. I want to share it with you as we prepare for communion. When tribes roamed Russia, much as the Indian tribes roamed the Americas, the tribes which controlled the best hunting and the choicest natural resources were the tribes which had the strongest and wisest leaders. The single tribe, which controlled the very best of the territory, was the tribe with the most powerful and the most-wise leader. One particular tribe maintained its control of the choice land because its leader was not only the most physically powerful but the most wise of all, and the success of the tribe was due to the fairness and the equity and the wisdom of the laws this great leader gave and enforced upon his people. His word was law, and among his greatest laws were that parents must be loved and honored. He also said that murder was punishable by death and stealing was to be severely punished.

The tribe was prospering greatly when suddenly a disturbing thing began to happen. Someone in the tribe was stealing. It was reported to the great leader that this was going on, and he sent out the proclamation that if the thief was caught, he would receive that severe punishment, ten lashes from the tribal whip master. The stealing continued despite the warning, so he raised it to 20 lashes. It went on, so he raised it to 30 lashes, and finally he raised it to 40 lashes and knew there was only one person in the whole tribe that could survive that lashing and that was him because he was superior in strength.

Finally, the thief was caught. To the horror of everyone, it was his own mother. The tribe was in shock. What was the leader going to do? His law was that in everything, parents were to be loved and honored. But thieves were to be whipped. Great arguments arose on the day of judgment as it approached. Was he going to satisfy his love and save his mother or was he going to satisfy his law and have her die under the whip? Because she could never endure that. Soon tribal members were divided and even making wagers on what he would do, and finally the judgment day came. The tribe was gathered around the great compound in the center of which a large post was driven into the ground. The leader's great throne sat in the place of prominence, and with great pomp and ceremony, the leader entered, took his place on the throne, and the silence was deafening.

Soon his frail little mother was brought in between towering warriors. They tied her to the post. The crowd murmured in debate. Will he satisfy his love at the expense of law or his law at the expense of his love? The tribal whip master entered, a powerful man with bulging muscles, a great leather whip in his hand, and as he approached the little lady, the warriors ripped her shirt off her, exposing her frail little back to the cruelty of the lash. Everyone gasped. Was the leader really going to let her die?

He sat staring without moving. Every eye was darting from him to the whip master and back again. The whip master took his stance, his great arm cracked the whip in the air as he prepared to bring the first lash upon her. In every heart was the question: Would he allow his love to be violated or his law?

Just as the whip master started to bring his powerful arm forward with the first cutting stroke on that frail little back, the leader held up his hand to halt the punishment. A great sigh went up from the tribe. His love was going to be satisfied. But what about his law? They watched him rise from his throne and he strode toward his mother. As he walked he was removing his own shirt. He threw it aside and proceeded to wrap his great arms around his little mother, exposing that huge muscular back to the whip master, and then breaking the heavy silence he commanded, "Proceed with the punishment." Thus both his law and his love were satisfied.

The Bible says the wages of sin is what? Death. And the Bible says Jesus died for our sins. He satisfied His love, He died in our place; He satisfied His law, He died for sin. And if you come to Christ, the judgment you should receive, Christ takes in your behalf. What a gift.