

## Reward of Works

### **Romans 2:6 who (God) will render to each person according to his deeds:**

Last week we saw that there is a break between Romans 2:5 and Romans 2:6. Verse 6 introduces the issue of rewards for good works for the next few verses. It is also a bridge from the present time including both immoral and moral degeneracy, to the future judgments both for believers and unbelievers.

**Render.** To give to someone what is due based upon deeds performed.

Legalists might jump for joy thinking that all the “good” works they have done and continue to do will be rewarded. The word for faith does not show up in this chapter. But wait until we get to the next chapter. Paul is setting up the self-righteous moral man who depends on the Law in this chapter. He thinks that his good deeds based in the Law will be rewarded in eternity. But then Paul hits him with faith, faith, and more faith in chapter 3. In a way, this reminds me of the tactic Nathan used on David after Uriah was murdered. David judged a man in a story told by Nathan. The story was told symbolically of David’s sin.

**2 Samuel 12:5 Then David’s anger burned greatly against the man, and he said to Nathan, “As the Lord lives, surely the man who has done this deserves to die.**

**2 Samuel 12:6 He must make restitution (not the same word in Romans 2, but similar concept)**

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**for the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing and had no compassion.”**

**2 Samuel 12:7 Nathan then said to David, “You are the man!”**

Paul is setting up the moral self-righteous legalist who depends on the Law for salvation and then pulls the rug of works from under him.

**Deeds.** This is the word for “works.”

Verse 6 is a quote from the Old Testament. It may be sourced from one or both of Psalm 62:12 and/or Proverbs 24:12. Paul is using it to refer to a well understood principle. Works are rewarded. Human works are rewarded in the physical world. Only God’s works are rewarded in the spiritual world. But the faith principle is behind this. Paul will use Abraham’s faith as an example of how individuals receive righteousness from God. God’s perspective.

There is a movie titled “Ratatouille” in which a food critic is going to evaluate the cooking at a restaurant. He says, “You provide the food and I will provide the perspective.”

Paul has done something like that. He is providing spiritual food and expecting the Jewish Law-oriented legalist to apply his human legalistic perspective to it. As Herman has said, “the Bible is written to reveal and to conceal.” It depends upon the reader’s perspective. A legalist will see the word “works” and see his own meritorious works as deserving of reward. After all, “I did this for God.” Yet we know that human righteousness is abhorrent to God (Isaiah 64:6). But Paul uses this legalist mindset to draw the legalist into his argument. The legalist might think, “Why, this Paul isn’t such a bad guy after all. He agrees that works are rewarded.” The right question to ask then is, “Whose works?” The

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legalist thinks it is his works. The correct answer is “God’s works.” Remember Paul’s boast:

**1 Corinthians 15:10 But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me did not prove vain; but I labored even more than all of them, yet not I, but the grace of God with me.**

Perspective.

**Romans 2:7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life;**

**Those.** Remember from last week, there is a shift from second person to third person. The next verse, verse 8, starts with the same Greek word setting up a parallel but antithetical thought. Good works in this verse and unrighteousness in the next. This is part of a chiasm. I’ll explain that at the end of the lesson.

**Good.** Good is the Greek word *agathos*. Some pastors suggest that in many passages, this Greek word refers to good of intrinsic value. This is “divine” good. But Paul is circumspect at this point using it to lure the self-righteous Law abiding man into the argument. “I am a good person. I don’t do the really bad sins, so I am good.” But, from God’s perspective, it must be perfect. Sinful man cannot produce perfect good. Only the Holy Spirit can produce this kind of work. God’s perspective.

Just a side note: The woman’s name “Agatha,” as in Agatha Christie, comes from this Greek word.

**Perseverance.** The Greek word is our friend for patience *hypomone*. This is a kind of waiting, which is associated with faith from the spiritual

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perspective. Yet, this can be misinterpreted by the moralist. He thinks that by continued “good works” on his part he will be rewarded by God.

**Glory.** This is an important word for Paul. I will reserve a detailed discussion of it for a later date. But we share in Christ’s glory being positionally in Christ. So there are people who seek that glory. That is not a bad thing if you understand how to get there: walk by faith. It is not “our” glory, but the glory of Jesus Christ. Pharisee’s understood that people should give glory to God. Unfortunately for many of them, they did not recognize true glory when they saw it.

John chapter 9 includes the story of Jesus healing a man who was born blind.

**John 9:24 So a second time they called the man who had been blind, and said to him, “Give glory to God; we know that this man is a sinner.”**

The legalistic Pharisees understood that glory belongs to God. Yet, Jesus’ miracle by means of the Holy Spirit does not meet their standard because it was accomplished on the Sabbath. Not only did they not understand God’s glory, but they didn’t understand the rules of the Sabbath. It was a time to give glory to God for His works. Part of the Pharisee’s problem with the Sabbath was that they built “fences” around the Law. They wanted to find a way to prevent people from violating the Law. So they made up some rules that were stricter than the Law. So even if the stricter laws were violated the people would not actually violate the Law. The problem with that reasoning is the Law was written so that humans could not even keep the original Law of Moses. So anything stricter would have been even more impossible to keep. It had the effect of distorting the Law. The Law was a mechanism to convince us of the need for God’s righteousness through faith.

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**Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept in custody under the law, being shut up to the faith which was later to be revealed.**

**Galatians 3:24 Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we may be justified by faith.**

This healing of the blind man was a work of God and should have been celebrated.

**John 5:44 How can you believe, when you receive glory from one another and you do not seek the glory that is from the one and only God?**

If we take John's narrative as a commentary in John chapter 5, the healing of the lame man, in a Jewish/Pharisee perspective, they are looking at glory and probably also honor and incorruption in a "here and now" physical sense. But Paul is pointing towards eternity.

**Honor.** The Greek word can mean honor, value, price.

**Immortality.** The base word in Greek is a word for corruption. It is prefixed with "a" which means not. So Wuest (quoted below) probably has it correct, "incorruptibility."

I struggled with how to present these words and connect them. Then, "I stumbled" across the resurrection passage of 1 Corinthians 15. Wow. All three words are used in a similar context: entrance into eternity in a resurrection body, incorruptible and in glory.

These three words which are in a context that looks towards eternal life are all used in 1 Corinthians 15 of the human body.

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**1 Corinthians 15:42 So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable (word translated immortality in Romans 2:7) body;**

**1 Corinthians 15:43 it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power;**

**1 Corinthians 15:44 it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body.**

Robby Dean's explanation of the words in this passage:

“1 Corinthians 15:42 "So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable {body,} it is raised an imperishable {body;}” This is the answer to the question: How are the dead raised up? They are raised up in incorruption. They now have an incorruptible body, not subject to failure in any way. [43] "it is sown in dishonour [in death], it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; [44] it is sown a natural [ψυχικος, i.e. without a spirit; born an unbeliever] body, it is raised a spiritual body [regenerated]. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual {body.}” So there is a movement from what we have in this present mortal body to a new kind of body.<sup>1</sup>” Remember Jesus’ prayer in John chapter 17.

**John 17:22 The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one;**

**John 17:23 I in them and You in Me, that they may be perfected in unity, so that the world**

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<sup>1</sup> <https://deanbible.org/new-testament-menuitem/1-corinthians-menuitem/message/2002-1stcorinthians-107/read>

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**may know that You sent Me, and loved them, even as You have loved Me.**

**John 17:24 Father, I desire that they also, whom You have given Me, be with Me where I am, so that they may see My glory which You have given Me, for You loved Me before the foundation of the world.**

**Romans 2:8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.**

This verse starts with the same Greek word as does verse 7: “to those.” But, there is the addition of an adversative conjunction. It is OK to translate it as “but.” But, to show the parallel structure, this could have been translated as something like “to those, by contrast, ...”

**Do not obey.** The word is one I didn’t expect. It means to not be persuaded. Wuest translates it “non-persuadable.” Essentially it is a word dovetailing with faith in the negative. Look at the use of this word by John in John 3:36:

**John 3:36 He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him.”**

It is a different word than Paul uses in chapter 1 about obedience that is faith. But the idea is similar except here it is negative.

**Indignation.** Literally from the Greek, “anger.” Let’s not sugar coat this translation. We are talking eternal destinations here.

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Here is how the Wuest translation (very literal) handles this:

**Romans 2:7 (Wuest) to those on the one hand who by steadfastness of a good work seek glory and honor and incorruptibility, life eternal;**

**Romans 2:8 but to those on the other hand who out of a factious spirit are both also non-persuadable with respect to the truth and persuadable with respect to unrighteousness, wrath and anger.**

As I type in the words of the Wuest translation, I found myself liking it better than either the NASB or the NIV. It is not literal word by word translation, but I think it captures the intent and flow of Paul's thought better.

**Romans 2:9 *There will be* tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek,**

Verse 9 is a continuation of anti-God evil from verse 8.

**Romans 2:10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.**

This verse takes us back to the glory seeker of verse 7.

We will take these two verses together. It is interesting to note the first word in the Greek of these verses. Verse 9 starts with "tribulation." Verse 10 starts with "glory."



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**Romans 2:11 For there is no partiality with God.**

This verse is a natural link to verse 6 above. In between these verses we have judgment on all: good and unrighteousness. Read them together:

**Romans 2:6/11 who will render to each person according to his deeds: For there is no partiality with God.**

Key here in verse 11 is “no partiality.” God acts according to His perfect standard of righteousness. If He did anything else, He would pervert His righteousness.

I mentioned a “chiasm” earlier. Here is the definition of chiasm from [gotquestions.org](http://gotquestions.org).

“A chiasm (also called a chiasmus) is a literary device in which a sequence of ideas is presented and then repeated in reverse order. The result is a “mirror” effect as the ideas are “reflected” back in a passage. Each idea is connected to its “reflection” by a repeated word, often in a related form. The term chiasm comes from the Greek letter chi, which looks like our letter X. Chiastic pattern is also called “ring structure.”<sup>2</sup>”

The chiasm of Romans 2:6-11. I have formatted it to highlight the structure of the chiasm

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.gotquestions.org/chiasm-chiastic.html>

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**Romans 2:11 For there is no partiality with God.**

The self-righteous legalistic Jew might become uncomfortable at this point. How can a Gentile, in this case, Greek, be able to be judged apart from the Law?

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