

Take-Home 3: God Shows No Partiality

Romans 2:1-3:8 · Keep this sheet; bring it back each week

What We Found

The trap sprang on us. "In passing judgment upon him you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, are doing the very same things" (2:1). God's kindness is not indulgence; it "is meant to lead you to repentance" (2:4), and his judgment is impartial and real: "he will render to every man according to his works" (2:6), a line Paul quotes from Israel's own prayer book, "thou dost requite a man according to his work" (Ps 62:12).

Every human being carries the law's core "written on their hearts," with conscience as its witness (2:15), and God will judge even "the secrets of men" (2:16). Bearing God's name raises the stakes of dishonoring it (2:24). And the heart-circumcision Paul preaches (2:29) turned out to be Moses' own promise: "the Lord your God will circumcise your heart... so that you will love the Lord your God with all your heart" (Deut 30:6): the inward thing God demands is the inward thing God will supply.

Voices of the Church

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. MOSES THE BLACK

When the elders summoned Abba Moses to judge a sinning brother, he came carrying a leaking jug filled with water: my sins run out behind me where I cannot see them, and today I come to judge the errors of another. The brothers said nothing more, and forgave (Sayings of the Desert Fathers, Abba Moses 2). Romans 2:1, performed.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JOHN HENRY NEWMAN

St. John Henry Newman called conscience "the aboriginal Vicar of Christ, a prophet in its informations, a monarch in its peremptoriness, a priest in its blessings and anathemas" (Letter to the Duke of Norfolk, section 5). God stationed a representative inside every human being; and, as the Church teaches of conscience (CCC 1783-1785), a vicar can be malformed or shouted down, which is why conscience must be formed, not merely consulted.

VOICE OF THE CHURCH: ST. JEROME

St. Jerome, in his commentary on Ezekiel, speaks of a spark of conscience not extinguished even in Cain: a remnant witness by which the soul knows it sins even while sinning. The witness on the heart can be suppressed, but it does not go out.

Live It This Week

- Once this week, when you catch yourself judging someone, stop and name silently one of your own sins that runs out behind you unseen, and pray for the person instead.

- Pray Deuteronomy 30:6 for yourself each day: Lord, circumcise my heart so that I love you with all of it.
- Do one hidden act of good this week that no one will ever know about, remembering that God judges even secrets (2:16), the good ones included.

Memory Verse

"Or do you presume upon the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience? Do you not know that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?"

Romans 2:4 (RSV2CE)

Before Next Session

Read Romans 3:9-31 once, slowly; next session is the heart of the letter. Catechism references for this session: CCC 678, 682, 1776-1777, 1783-1785, 1954-1956. Keep your sealed My Guess sheet safe; it opens in Session 8.