

GRACE TO YOU

ROMANS 2:1-11

INEXCUSABLE EXCUSES



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

"But I didn't know it was wrong!" I'm sure we've all heard our children use this excuse. In saying it, they're saying, "I don't deserve punishment because I lacked knowledge." If that's true, then yes, our punishment of them will usually be reduced or maybe altogether removed. We accept lack of knowledge as a reasonable excuse if our child is young and really didn't know, for example, that a swear word was a bad word. But we wouldn't accept that excuse from our teen, because they know better. Knowledge takes away excuses.

When I was vacationing in the USA in 1999, I remember being stopped by a police officer for traveling 70 mph in a 65mph highway zone. When I said, "I'm sorry, officer, I didn't know that highway's had different speed limits in the USA, he let me off with a warning because he could tell I was a tourist and that it was a reasonable excuse. When I was recently stopped for doing 75 mph in a 70mph zone, I realized I couldn't use the "Scottish tourist" excuse any more, because I knew the law after fifteen years living in the USA. Knowledge took away my excuse.

Is the same true of our spiritual excuses? **How does spiritual knowledge affect our spiritual excuses?** Does spiritual knowledge excuse us or accuse us? We need to know this so that we can abandon any inexcusable excuses. In Romans 2:1-11, the Apostle Paul examines the connection between spiritual knowledge and spiritual excuses.

BACKGROUND

In Romans 1:18-32, the Apostle Paul indicted all pagans, convicting them of inexcusable guilt before God because they rejected the knowledge of God they received through general revelation. They didn't have all possible spiritual knowledge, but they had enough and rejected what they did have.

At that point, Paul imagines a complacent Jew nodding his head and agreeing with God's judgment upon the heathen for rejecting the knowledge of God through general revelation. Paul reads his mind as the Jew says to himself, "These awful pagans who rejected God's voice in creation and conscience deserve all that's coming to them." Just when the Jew is about to turn away in confident tut-tutting self-righteousness, Paul startles him with an even more scathing denunciation: **"Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things. Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God?"** (1-3).



He had spiritual knowledge that affected his spiritual excuses.
How does spiritual knowledge affect our spiritual excuses?



1. THE HYPERCRITICAL ARE HYPOCRITICAL (1-2)

A Hypercritical Man

Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another... (1).

The Jews of Paul's day were super-critical and super-condemning of the Gentiles. They considered themselves experts in morals and were well-practiced in issuing their judgments on the heathen. They knew the law, studied the law, taught the law, and judged those who broke the law. They certainly couldn't use the excuse of "I didn't know." That would have been like a Supreme Court Justice saying, "Oh, I didn't know the US constitution." That's a totally invalid excuse. They knew the law better than anybody and constantly judged others with their expertise.

A Hypocritical Man

For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things (1-2).

Although they were hypercritical, they were also hypocritical. They condemned the Gentiles and then did the exact things they criticized the Gentiles for. They were good at passing judgment but terrible at pleasing the Judge. They saw themselves as judges, but Paul warned them that they will be the judged. The Gentiles did these sins with little knowledge, but the Jews did them with full knowledge that they were sins and that God's judgment would certainly fall on them.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Beware of being hyper-critical. The hyper-critical are usually hypocritical. Hyper-critics are often hypocrites.

Beware of God's criticism. If we sin without knowledge, we will still be judged. If we sin with knowledge, we will be judged more than the ignorant, not less. If we sin with knowledge while condemning others for the same sin, we will be judged most.

HYPER-CRITICS ARE HYPOCRITES



What's God's message to the hypercritical hypocrites?
Hypocritical hypocrites will be hyper-criticized.



2. THE HYPERCRITICAL WILL BE HYPERCRITICIZED (3-11)

A Deluded Person

Do you suppose, O man—you who judge those who practice such things and yet do them yourself—that you will escape the judgment of God? (3)

Do you really think that being a good judge of sins will excuse you of committing these sins. If so, you are deceiving yourself. You may be an expert in judging sin, but that gives you no excuse for practicing sin.

A Presumptuous Person

Or do you presume on the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance? (4)

God does not judge everyone every time they sin. When we sin, God usually waits and waits. He does not act immediately to condemn, but rather gives opportunities and openings. However, when some people see God's patience, kindness, and long-suffering they conclude, "God is soft and doesn't know what to do." Instead of saying, "I will use this time of God's kind patience to ask for mercy," they say, "I will use this time of delayed judgment to accelerate my sin." The whole Old Testament is a story of God's kindness, forbearance, and patience.

A Hard-hearted Person

But because of your hard and impenitent heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed (5).

Delusion leads to presumption which leads to hardness. As the heart hardens, judgment heightens. The hardness goes deeper, the judgment rises higher.

A Hyper-Criticized Person

He will render to each one according to his works...for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. There will be tribulation and distress for every human being who does evil, the Jew first and also the Greek (6-9).

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

God's judgment will be upon the judges (1): In fact judges will be judged more severely.

God's judgment is right (2): It is perfect and truthful justice.

God's judgment is universal (3): No one will escape because they are irreligious or because they are religious.

God's judgment is suspended (4): It's postponed for a limited time to give opportunity to repent.

God's judgment is growing (5): God's Judgment fund that gets bigger every day. It's a guaranteed growth fund.

God's judgment focuses on deeds (6): Works are judged as the necessary visible fruit of invisible faith.

God's judgment is discriminating (7-9): It carefully divides between individuals.

God's judgment shows no favoritism (10-11): God judges the favored most, not the favorites least.

AS YOU JUDGE
YOU WILL BE JUDGED



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others' stories



SUMMARY



A NEW CHAPTER

Gospel. Is there hope for the hypercritical and the hypocritical? Yes, our hope is God's judgment executed on Jesus, the just for the unjust, that's he may bring us to God (1 Pet. 3:18).

Beware. Hypercritics and hypocrites are in serious danger of God's judgment (Luke 12:1; Matt. 7:1-3).

Excuses. We are excuseless. Spiritual knowledge removes excuses and increases judgment (Luke 12:48).

Prayer. Just Judge, I am unjust in my judgments and therefore deserving of your judgment. Let Jesus be judged in my place, the just for the unjust, that he may bring me to God.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Can you think of situations where lack of knowledge may be a good excuse?
2. Can you think of situations where increased knowledge removes excuses?
3. Identify some times when you have done what you have judged others for.
4. Why is hypocrisy so closely connected with criticism?
5. Why does God judge judges more severely?
6. How would you bring the Gospel to the hypocritical and the hyper-critical.

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