

The Judgment of God (is Fun)

Romans 2:1-16

Romans (no. 5 in the series)

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Video and audio versions available online:

<https://relentless-love.org/sermons/the-judgement-of-god-is-fun/>

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This document was prepared by Brett Eades using Peter's notes and the video version of this sermon. If you encounter any significant discrepancies or errors in this document, please let Brett know. Thank you!

Prayer

And so in life and death Lord, abide with me. Shine through the gloom and point me to Heaven's skies—I think that's how the song goes, something like that. God, help us to see you, we pray. It feels like we're cowering in the dark, in a corner and what is it that you're saying to us Father? Help us to hear it, help us to preach it, help us to be it, Father. In Jesus's name, Amen.

Message

This is our fifth sermon from the Book of Romans and a continuation of our last sermon from Romans chapter 1 titled "The Dishonorable Passion."

In Romans 1, Paul told us that the wrath of God is revealed from heaven (wherever that is?) against all the ungodliness of men who imprison the Truth in their unrighteousness. And so, God gave them—which is us—up, to our own dishonorable passions. The wrath of God is to give us what we want. He gave them up (writes Paul) to idolatry, to confusing and much disputed homosexual activities, to covetousness, gossip, murder, strife, faithlessness, boasting, etc., etc. and even disobedience to parents.

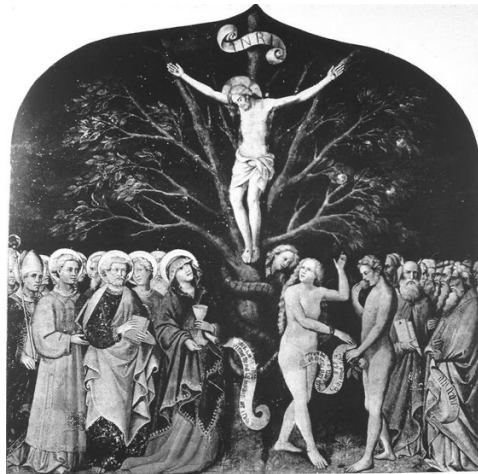
Then he writes,

Romans 2:1:

Therefore, you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn [damn] yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.

Just by asking, "What are these things? Have I done these things? Who does these things?" you, somehow, do whatever is condemned in all these things. You may think to yourself, "I've never murdered. I'm not a homosexual, and I don't read people magazine, so I'm definitely not a gossip." But Paul is saying, whatever is evil in reading people magazine, whatever is evil in any sexual encounter (homosexual or heterosexual), whatever is evil in the way anyone addresses their parents is an evil that you yourself have committed, just by considering the people on the list. "You" writes Paul "practice the very same things."

Last time we asked, What is that thing, in all those things, that we all practice? We asked, What is the dishonorable passion?



"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

I suggested that it must have something to do with this tree in the middle of this garden and our passion for the knowledge of Good and evil. Isn't that what we seek every time we attempt to judge?

Without the knowledge of Good and evil, it's impossible to judge. "In [Jesus] are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge" wrote Paul.ⁱ Wouldn't that include the knowledge of Good and evil. Jesus is the Good in flesh, hanging on that tree. Perhaps we take his life—the Life—every time we sin; every time we judge.

Last time we noted that there are two desires represented in this picture.

- #1 Humanity's desire: to take knowledge of the Good and
- #2 God's desire: to make us Good.

- #1 Humanity's passion—the dishonorable passion: to take the Life of the Good and use it to make ourselves like God.
- #2 God's passion: to give us his Life and make us good—the passion of the Christ.

- #1 Humanities' judgment—to Crucify Christ—that's sin.
- #2 God's Judgment—to give his Life as a ransom for many—that's Grace.

That's a lot to think about, but Paul was a Jewish Rabbi and I'm convinced this was the dominant picture floating around Paul's brain. He wrote to the Corinthians saying, "I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."ⁱⁱ This is original sin... and before that, original blessing.

Romans 2:1:

... you condemn [damn] yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things. ² We know that the judgment of God rightly falls on those who practice such things.

What is the Judgment of God? Next verse.

Romans 2:3:

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

Yes! That is exactly what we suppose.

- We suppose that life is a zero-sum game, you keep score, and play to win.
- We suppose that God grades on a curve; we think that's our only hope.
- We suppose that our neighbor's failure is our only hope for success.

So, we're terrified to pass the ball, for the coach might think our teammate [the person we pass the ball to] is a better player than us. Next verse.

Romans 2:4:

⁴ Or do you presume on [normally translated "despise"] the riches of his kindness [n. *chrestotes* also "goodness"] and forbearance and patience, not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?

Jesus said, "Love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return, and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for he is kind [adj. *chrestos*, "good"] to the ungrateful and the evil. ³⁶ Be merciful, even as your Father is merciful.ⁱⁱⁱ

"Do you despise the riches of God's kindness?" asks Paul.

Yes! Of course, we do.

- We're just like the older brother who despises the Father's kindness to the younger prodigal brother and so, trades the party for outer darkness.
- We're just like the early workers in the vineyard, who despise the Master's kindness to the late workers in the Vineyard and so, trade the Vineyard for the wilderness.
- We're just like Jonah, who despises God's kindness toward the Ninevites and so, casts himself—he's a castaway—casts himself outside the city, where he weeps and gnashes his teeth.
- We think life is a zero-sum game, that God grades on a curve, so our neighbor's failure should be our success and most definitely not rewarded with kindness.
- We think that kindness is bad judgment; that's our judgment upon kindness. Next verse.

Romans 2:5:

But because of your hard and impenitent [non-repenting] heart^{iv} you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed.

What is God's Righteous Judgment? And when is it revealed? Paul seems to think that we all despise it—and it seems that he's right. We threaten people with it: "Judgment day is coming!" We even name horror movies after it: Terminator II: Judgment day.

[Image: Movie poster for Terminator II: Judgement Day – Arnold Schwarzenegger in a leather jacket, on a motorcycle, holding a machine gun.]

- We despise it.
- We all want to escape it.
- We even threaten people with it.

Judgement Day is coming. So, you better trust Jesus to save you from the Judgment of God. Check out this poster I found on the internet:



"Jesus saves, but after this the judgment." So, does Jesus save us from the Judgment of God, our Father? What is the Righteous Judgment of God?

In the Middle Ages the church taught that we were justified by works according to all sorts of laws, and rules and rituals, like confession, penance, baptism, communion. So, at the end of time God will judge our works and reward some for their work with rest, and punish others with non-rest, restless turmoil, or more work.

During the Reformation, reformers taught that we're justified not by works of the law, but by faith. And then, they taught that we must confirm our faith with works. So, at the end of time, God will judge our faith, and reward some for their faith with the manifest reality of the Kingdom of God. Followers of Joseph Arminius taught that faith was our free choice, but our free choice was not a "work," although it would manifest as a work. Followers of Luther and John Calvin taught that faith was not our free choice, but the work of God's free choice, so none could boast.

Both taught that some would have faith and be rewarded with heaven, and some would lack faith and be punished with hell. The followers of Arminius could blame hell on people, for they chose hell, and didn't choose heaven—they had bad judgment, which implies that their good judgment could've saved them. The followers of Calvin couldn't blame hell on the bad judgment of people, so they had to blame hell on the good judgment of God. And so, they said, "God chose some for eternal life through no merit of their own and God chose some for eternal damnation through no merit of their own, all to the glory of the righteous judgment of God."

It's no wonder that we want to run from God's Judgment, for it sounds insane. And it's almost impossible to preach on God's Judgment, for we Evangelical Americans are a mix of Roman Catholic, Arminian and Calvinists believers who claim to believe a boatload of contradictory things. And yet, we all tend to agree that there are rules, God will judge, some will win, and others will lose, and Heaven is not having to do what God required you to do, on earth.

So, some think the reward for faith, is to no longer need faith, for you'll see God and the whole Kingdom. Just like some think the reward for work, is to no longer work, just rest. Just like we all seem to think that the reward for righteousness, whatever it is, is that we will no longer have to be righteous. "Game Over!" The reward for winning the game is to stop playing the game... we think.

That's why we say things like: You should give your gold to the church, so you'll be rewarded with gold—streets of gold—in heaven. Forgive your enemies now, so you can refuse to forgive them forever, as you look down on them forever dying in a lake of fire, as you feast on broken bread, red wine, and roast lamb. Delay your passion now, so you can indulge it forever in heaven. We think righteousness is delayed gratification, but Jesus talked as if righteousness is an entirely new gratification, new desire, new mind, new psyche, new passion, or a new judgment.

Romans 2:5-6:

....you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of wrath when God's righteous judgment will be revealed. ⁶ He will render to each one according to his works:

Well, that's terrifying, for Paul has already established that every one of us is guilty of every bad work on his list. That's terrifying! And that's confusing, for as Martin Luther loved to point out, in the next chapter, Paul writes "by works of the law no flesh will be justified in his sight."^v So, the things we do, in obedience to a law, don't justify us (make us right) before God. And yet God will render to each of us according to the things we do, do. Render what? Next verse.

Romans 2:7-8:

⁷ to those who by patience in well-doing [*good-working*] seek for glory and honor [that must be God's glory and honor, right?] and immortality, he will give eternal life [the life of the age to come]^{vi}; ⁸ but for those who are self-seeking [*eritheia*—it refers to someone who works only for a wage, like a day-laborer].

The "self-seeking," don't care about the project that everyone is working on; they only care about getting paid (their pay).

- They just want to justify themselves, not everything else.
- They just want to glorify themselves, which is not glorious in the least.
- They just want to honor themselves, which is not honorable at all.
- They just want to hold the ball, which means they'll lose the game.

Romans 2:8-10:

⁸ but for those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth [which is "imprisoned in the chains of our own unrighteousness"], but obey unrighteousness, there will be wrath and fury. ⁹ There will be tribulation and distress for every human being [Greek: *psyche*] 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.

Well, that's pretty straight forward. So, if you've ever done evil, I want you to stand up. Now look around. There will be tribulation and distress for these people. Now, if you've ever done good, would you stand up. I know most all of you, and I'm convinced you've done at least a little good for I've seen the good in you and you're here this morning, listening to this sermon right now! Look around and listen to the word of God: there will be glory, honor, and peace given to you.

If we take Paul seriously, we must all die—that is tribulation and distress. And we must all rise—rise from the dead—to the glory, honor, and peace of God, our Father. Jesus said, "whoever would save his psyche (translated "soul" or "life" or "being") will lose it." Yet everyone tries to save their psyche. And so, we religious folks say things like, "Don't you want to save your soul? We can give you knowledge of the good, so you can save your soul? From what? From the judgment of God." But, that's not how people get saved; that's how we all got damned, at a tree, in a garden, long ago.

Jesus said, “whoever would save his soul will lose it, but whoever loses his soul for my sake and the gospel’s will find it—lose and find his psyche.” That’s called “repentance,” it means getting a new mind, a new psyche, a new soul, a new passion, a new judgment from a new judger.

Romans 2:10-11:

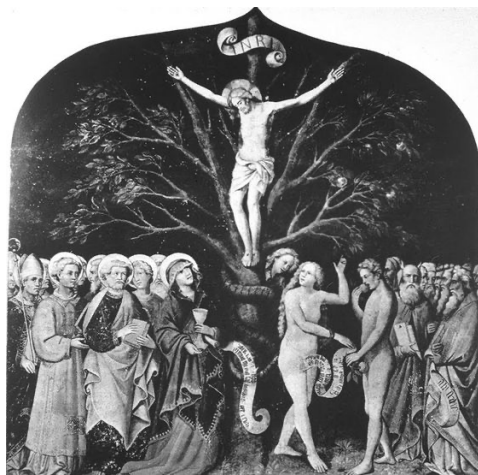
..., glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good, the Jew first and also the Greek. ¹¹ For God shows no partiality.^{vii}

“God shows no partiality,” that’s a nail in the coffin of five-point Calvinism. And also, perhaps, a nail in the coffin of everything we’ve ever believed about the judgment of God. For not only does God reward some, “due to no merit of their own,” I think Paul is going to make the argument that no one has any merit of their own, to be rewarded. We didn’t create ourselves and so, we can’t create ourselves, for what would we create ourselves with, that wasn’t already a gift of God’s Original Blessing?

Romans 2:11-15:

For God shows no partiality. ¹² For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. ¹³ For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified [literally “made right”]. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on [literally “in”] their hearts...

What is the law? Well, isn’t any law, the knowledge of good and evil reduced to letters on a page, or written in stone, so that we can take that knowledge and make our judgments? God gave his law to the Israelites on Mount Saini, but every group of people has laws, whether they’ve written them down or not. And that’s because every person has the knowledge of good and evil in the secret garden sanctuary that is their own heart.”



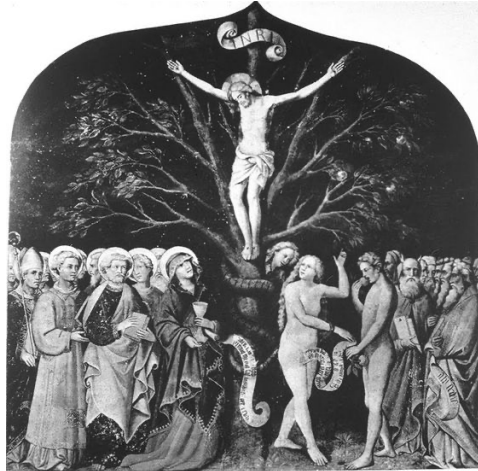
"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

So, what’s on the tree in the Garden of your own heart? Well, “Knowledge of the Good.” That’s the Good, in flesh, hanging on the tree in the middle of that garden—and that’s “the Life,” hanging on the tree in the middle of that garden. If you take the Good, to judge and so justify yourself, the Life dies. But if God gives the Good, to judge and so justify you, everything lives.

Romans 2:15-16:

They show that the work of the law is written in their hearts, while their conscience [syneidesis: consciousness] also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them ¹⁶ on that day when, according to my gospel [my good news], God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

So, what is the Righteous Judgment of God? Well, isn't it Jesus? Or at least, what God does with Jesus? Which, in some amazing, bizarre way includes what we have done with Jesus.



"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

So, what's hanging on the tree in the middle of the garden? Knowledge of the Good, which is the Life, who is the Judgment of God. And when does God do this judging?

- Two thousand years ago in the garden on Calvary.
- And at the beginning of time in the garden of Eden.
- And at the End of time in the garden city of the New Jerusalem.
- And right now, the moment that eternity touches time.
-

"Now is the judgment of this world" said Jesus, "now will the ruler of this world be cast out, and I, when I am lifted up [from the Earth], will draw all people to myself."^{viii}

And now I have to tell you a story about my judgment. I'm a Dad, and Jesus told us that God is our Dad. And every good Dad has a judgment. It's his passion and his deepest desire for himself, and for his children. I issued this judgment on more than one occasion, for instance, driving in our old blue van on vacation, while my four children bickered, whined, and complained about each other and the fact that no one cared about them. I might have even screamed out my judgment in wrath and anger: "Damn it kids. Can't we just have some fun!" My judgment was "fun" but "fun" is a rather complicated judgment to issue.



My children are now 27,30, 32 and 33, but when they were 2, 5, 7 and 8, we lived in Golden, in a house with an unfinished basement, and the potential for a lot of fun—the basement was our kingdom of fun. In the evenings, we'd go down to the basement and play ball—foursquare, soccer, football—except at that age we didn't keep score and there really were no rules, except one: pass the ball. Well, it happened on several occasions, I'd be downstairs with Jon, Elizabeth and Becky, playing ball and having a ball. We'd be "balling", as they say, when Coleman, who was 2 at the time, would come down the stairs. He could see the fun, but he didn't really understand the fun, but he knew that he wanted fun—he wanted fun too. And so, someone would pass him the ball and he'd just be thrilled with the ball, because the ball is good! He'd be so thrilled with the ball, he'd run with the ball, cradling the ball. And then holding the ball, he'd crouch in the corner, so no one would take the ball.

Then we'd all say, "Hey Coleman, pass the ball." But Coleman would just hold the ball. Then I'd issue my judgment: "Coleman, it will be way more fun, if you'd just pass the ball." Sometimes when Coleman wouldn't pass the ball, we'd all just leave him there, in the basement, hiding in the corner, in the dark, holding the ball. In other words, we'd deliver him up to his own passionate desire to hold the ball. And within a few minutes Coleman would start yelling "Daddy, Daddy, Daddy... Jon, Lizabeth, Becky!" Then he'd come up the stairs because he was lonely, afraid, and not having any fun. If you've ever held a ball for long, you've realized, "Well, this isn't fun, this is just a piece of plastic."

Sometimes when Coleman wouldn't pass the ball, and we were tired of waiting, I'd just enforce my judgment. I'd go over to the corner and say, "Sorry buddy, I giveth and now I taketh away" and I'd just rip the ball out of Colemans hands and pass it to one of the other kids so they could have fun. There would be tears, sorrow, and anger for Coleman, as he undoubtedly thought to himself, Dad hates me, and he is no fun! What Coleman did not understand was that my judgment is fun: fun itself.

So, how could I get Coleman to pass the ball? What if I promised a reward and threatened with a punishment?^{ix} Rewards and punishments appeal to our current desires and passions. So, what could I say to 2-year-old Coleman holding the ball? "Hey Coleman, if you pass the ball now, I'll let you hold the ball forever, alone in the basement (in the dark). And, if you don't pass the ball now, I'll take it from you, then give it back to you, so I can take it again, and give it back to you again, so I can take it again, for ever and ever and ever—we will pass the ball forever and ever and ever."

But you see? That's a weird threat, because that's the very good that Coleman saw and actually desired in the first place, although he didn't understand it: all of us passing the ball. So, by appealing to his current passions, with rewards and punishments, I'd teach him to fear heaven and lust for hell. And in that state, Coleman might pass the ball but only in lust and fear and it wouldn't be any fun; it would be work, I mean painful toil.

It wouldn't be play. You know play is? It's just work that is fun; It's work that you want to do—freely choose to do. It wouldn't be play; it would be gruesome toil (toil is work that is no fun). It would be toilsome work now, and hell later.

You know volleyball on a tropical island sounds like a slice of heaven to me. But it can also be the pit of hell. Remember this scene in the movie *Cast Away* with Tom Hanks? I'll leave the sound off, so that Facebook livestream doesn't shut us down.

[On screen: Tom Hanks is sitting by a fire with a volleyball on a stick. Peter describes what's happening and what Hanks is saying.]

Tom Hanks is arguing with his volleyball, named "Wilson." He says, "I'd rather take my chance out there on the ocean, than spend one more day on this shithole island talking to a God-damned volleyball"

[On screen: Hanks picks up "Wilson" and punts him away from the fire.]

And that's when Hanks decides to leave the island. If you insist on holding the ball, God may let you hold the ball for a time, but it won't be heaven, it will be hell, not God's judgment, but your own judgment.

The Father's judgment is fun: fun itself. And that's why what the Father wants is faith. I want faith. I want Coleman to get sick of his own judgment, and so surrender his judgment to my judgment, just long enough to pass the ball because he wants to pass the ball.

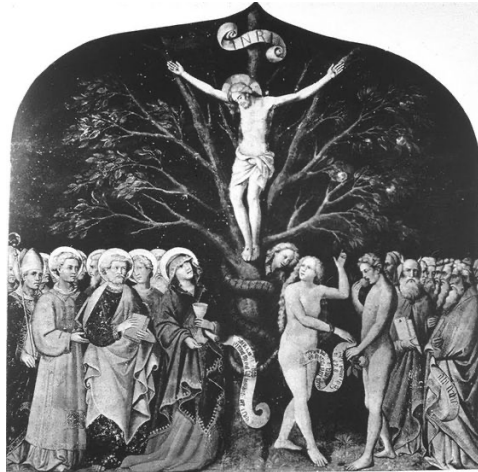
And when Coleman chooses to pass the ball, a miracle begins to happen: He sees Becky laugh, then Jon laugh, then Elizabeth laugh, and I laugh, as I pass the ball back to Coleman, and he passes it to Becky and we all laugh together—not a little joy but compound joy. And Coleman Repents: he loses himself in the game, and then finds himself playing the game. He comprehends more than himself, for he's been comprehended by the game and so now he passes the ball for the love of the game. He's no longer conscious of only Coleman, he's conscious all of us—it's a higher consciousness... called "fun."

By the time Coleman was in elementary school, and then all the way through high school, Coleman and I would stand in the street and just throw the ball back and forth for hours—it wasn't just a piece of plastic; it was fun. I submit to you that The Father's Righteous Judgment is Fun. So, of course the thing he desires is Faith. ^x

So how does the Father create faith? Well, he keeps passing the ball.

- He may leave his children in the basement for a time, holding the ball.
- He may even rip the ball from their hands in anger from time to time.
- But faith happens when his children watch him pass the ball—Pass the ball,—even at great expense to himself, so that his children see, that he considers all the pain to be worth the fun, the "joy set before him."^{xi}

So, what is the Ball?



"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

Well, maybe this is the ball: the thing that's hanging on the tree. What is that thing? Well, that's the Good and the Good in everything that's anything. It's the Word of God by whom all things are created and sustained. Now you may think, "But Peter, all creation isn't just a cheap piece of plastic, like a ball; everything that's anything is not nothing." That's true, and yet if you think it all belongs to you and so you only hold it to yourself, perhaps everything that's anything becomes nothing to you.

So, what's on the tree? Houses, cars, bottles of wine, and all the money in the world—do you hold the ball, or pass the ball? The thing on the tree is everything that's Good and it is the Good; God alone is Good said Jesus--It's God that's hanging on that tree. Now you may think, "But Peter, God is not a cheap piece of plastic." That's true, but if you take him only for yourself, perhaps you make him, who is everything, into a nothing to you and for you and in you. In other words, you crucify your Creator and turn life into death. The thing on the tree is the Creator, all Creation, and yourself-because you are his creation.

So, if you hold the ball—that is yourself—he dies, creation dies, and you die. You become a tomb that imprisons the Truth, who is also the Life. But if you die to yourself, and surrender to the Truth, you pass the ball and find yourself in the game—the infinite and eternal game called "Life," the One Life, the Body of the Resurrected Christ.^{xii}

So, what's that on the tree? The knowledge of good and evil, who is the Life, the manifest Judgment of God your father. He is the revelation of Love. Love is choosing to pass the ball. And Life is everyone that Loves. And the Life of Love is Happy. It is the judgment of God, our Father: Fun.

We're out of time, but I want to give you two quick words of advice.

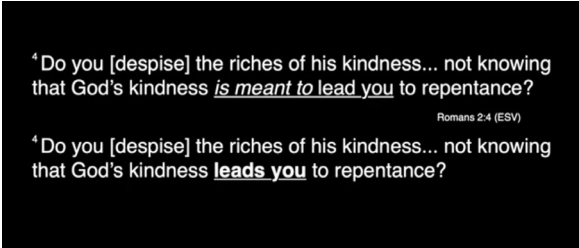
#1 if you want to understand Romans chapter 2 and the rest of Romans, just read it with these things in mind:

- When you read "Judgment of God" think "fun."
- When you read "faithlessness, unrighteousness, or sin" think "holding the ball."
- When you read "love, righteousness, faith, sacrifice, or grace" think "passing the ball."
- When you read "heaven" think of a bunch of little kids playing in a basement.

- And when you read “hell” think of one child clutching a ball, all to himself, all alone in one corner of that basement, with heaven all around, just waiting for him or her to join the fun.
- And when you read “repentance,” think of “the kindness” of our Dad.

In Romans 2:4 we read this question: “Do you [despise] the riches of his kindness... not knowing that his kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?” And yet Paul didn’t actually write that. Modern translators added that, or part of that. Paul didn’t write “his kindness is *meant* to lead you to repentance,” as if God tries kindness and when it doesn’t work, he switches to not kindness. Even God’s wrath is a function of his kindness. “Is meant to” is simply added by modern translators, as if they despise God’s kindness by assuming that it has no power.

Paul actually wrote what the King James, and all literal translations, reflect. He wrote, “Don’t you know that his kindness (the kindness of God) leads you to repentance.”



⁴Do you [despise] the riches of his kindness... not knowing that God's kindness is meant to lead you to repentance?
Romans 2:4 (ESV)

⁴Do you [despise] the riches of his kindness... not knowing that God's kindness leads you to repentance?

And like Jesus said, “The Father is kind to the ungrateful and the evil.” Which means that one day even the ungrateful and the evil will have fun. He is that kind!

Jesus does not save us from the Judgment of God; Jesus is the Judgment of God. But Jesus does save us from the wrath to come, yet only because Jesus is the Judgment of God within us right now, whenever we love.

Jesus knows how to have fun. So, it’s no wonder that the tax collectors and sinners wanted to hang out with Jesus. And It’s no wonder that religious folks wanted to take his life on a tree. We saw fun. But didn’t understand fun. So jealous of fun, we took the life of fun.

We took the ball from God the Father—that’s original sin. But God the Father had fore-given the ball, from the foundation of the world—that’s the original and eternal blessing. The Ball is an imperishable seed that dies and comes to life in you. It/he is more powerful than anything you can comprehend.

So, **#1:** Remember the judgment of God is fun.

And **#2:** If you want to have fun, cause you’re not having fun, don’t just try to have fun—because that will make everyone miserable. Instead, come sit at the base of this tree [looks up from the foot of the cross], and say, “Daddy, I’m not having fun. Am I holding the ball?” I bet you are. It might be your finances; it might be a bottle of wine; it might be Him—do you think you own him; as if he’s your private possession? It will certainly be yourself, your identity, your own righteousness, your pride—it’s your body, your flesh, your psyche; it’s your life.

Ask him, “Am I holding the ball?” Then ask him, “How can I choose to pass the ball?” And then, watch him pass the ball:

Communion

He takes bread and breaks it, saying this is my body given to you. And he takes the cup saying this is the covenant in my blood, drink of it, all of you.

If you just hold this to yourself, it won't be much fun, and you'll probably think, "It's just a bit of broken bread and a drop of wine." But if you receive it as a gift, and so pass it to your neighbor, you'll begin to realize: "the Kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Your dishonorable passion is to hold the ball. Your Father's eternal passion is Love. Love is Life, and Life is Fun.^{xiii}

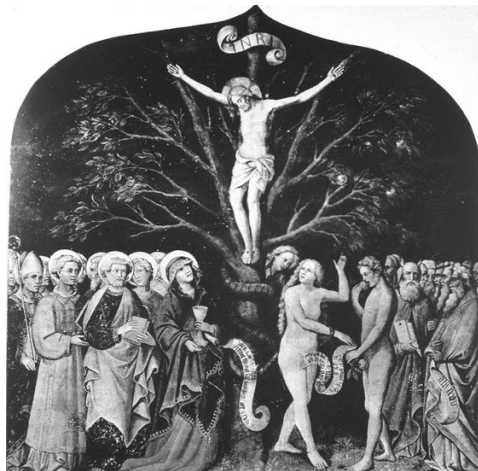
This is the painful doorway to eternal fun.
This is the Judgment of your Father.
This is the Kindness of God.

Eat it, and pass it, to everyone, in Jesus's name. Amen.

Benediction

Prayer: So Father we thank you that from the foundation of the world you have predestined your children to freely choose fun. God, I get so frustrated with you sometimes until I remember that you don't want me to hold the ball. So, God forgive me because you know I'm a ball hog. Thank you that you have this incredible, ecstatic joy; well, you are this incredible, ecstatic joy—Father, Son and Holy Spirit—and you have predestined us to join your party. You're Good. In Jesus's name, we see it and thank you. Amen.

And so, we'll try to pick this up next week from what I said there at the end because Paul is going to go on to talk about religion, which is a thing that will really mess with you, when you get into it.



"The Fall and Redemption of Man" by Giovanni da Modena

Think about this picture and ask God, "Am I holding the ball?" Then just listen to what he tells you. This often leads to an incredible liberation on the other side of the question: I can have fun. In Jesus's name, may you believe the gospel and have fun.

Endnotes

ⁱ Colossians 2:3

ⁱⁱ 1 Corinthians 2:2

ⁱⁱⁱ Luke 6:35-36

^{iv} Notice that Paul keeps using the singular to talk about all of us, "every one of us who judges." We all have one heart, a hard heart, and we need a new heart, God's heart—Jesus from the bosom of the Father.

^v Romans 3:20 NKJV

^{vi} Notice that immortality and eternal life are not necessarily the same thing. Immortality is lack of corruption, not dying. And eternal (aionios) life is life of the coming age. That age is not part of chronological time, but God's time beyond our comprehension of time. Eternal life is behind us, before us, under and over us, and all around us. Eternal life is at hand, just as the kingdom of God is at hand, and kind of like fun is at hand if we would only choose to pass the ball.

^{vii} "Do not judge by appearances (the face), but judge with right judgment," (John 7:24). "Partiality" is *prosopolepsia* in the Greek, meaning "to judge by the face."

^{viii} John 12:31-32

^{ix} That's how we do it with professional athletes, who are no longer willing to simply play for the love of the game... but not how we do it with 2 yr. olds, who could still learn to love the game.

^x And *the essence of all sin*, original sin—is always some form of holding the ball. And *the essence of all righteousness*, is passing the ball... in faith.

^{xi} Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, fixing our eyes on Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of faith. For **the joy set before him** he endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. —Hebrews 12:1-2

^{xii} You die with him and rise with him (Romans 6:5-11) to infinite and eternal fun. You lose yourself and find yourself in the game—and the game is life, the Judgment of God the father is Life (John 12:50)—Jesus's Life, eternal Life

^{xiii} It is in this sense that, as there may be pleasures in hell (God shield us from them), there may be something not all unlike pains in heaven (God grant us soon to taste them).

For in self-giving, if anywhere, we touch a rhythm not only of all creation but of all being. For the Eternal Word also gives Himself in sacrifice; and that not only on Calvary. For when He was crucified, He "did that in the wild weather of His outlying provinces which He had done at home in glory and gladness" [George Macdonald]. From before the foundation of the world He surrenders begotten Deity back to begetting Deity in obedience. And as the Son glorifies the Father, so also the Father glorifies the Son. And, with submission, as becomes a layman, I think it was truly said "God loveth not Himself as Himself but as Goodness; and if there were aught better than God, He would love that and not Himself." From the highest to the lowest, self exists to be abdicated and, by that abdication, becomes the more truly self, to be thereupon yet the more abdicated, and so forever. This is not a heavenly law which we can escape by remaining earthly, nor an earthly law which we can escape by being saved. What is outside the system of self-giving is not earth, nor nature, nor "ordinary life," but simply and solely Hell. . . .

The golden apple of selfhood, thrown among the false gods, became an apple of discord because they scrambled for it. They did not know the first rule of the holy game, which is that every player must by all means touch the ball and then immediately pass it on. To be found with it in your hands is a fault: to cling to it, death. But when it flies to and fro among the players too swift for eye to follow, and the great master Himself leads the revelry, giving Himself eternally to His creatures in the generation, and back to Himself in the sacrifice, of the Word, then indeed the eternal dance "makes heaven drowsy with harmony." All pains and pleasures we have known on earth are early initiations in the movements of that dance: but the dance itself is strictly incomparable with the sufferings of this present time. As we draw nearer to its uncreated rhythm, pain and pleasure sink almost out of sight. There is joy in the dance, but it does not exist for the sake of joy. It does not even exist for the sake of good, or of love. It is Love Himself, and Good Himself, and therefore happy.

[That's Fun]

- C. S. Lewis, The Problem of Pain