Sermon Title: "God’s Judgment and Our Only Hope" Romans 2:1–16

In 1977 a ground breaking movie hit the cinemas, it would spawn a dynasty of movies lasting over 30 years. Netting 100s of millions at the box office and billions in memobillia and marketing, the movie was …Star Wars.. and this very first movie, was later to be revealed as number 4 in a series of 6 movies and was renamed, it was called.. Star wars a new hope, maybe shouldn’t be called a new hope, but the first hope, or our only hope, that’s the title of my sermon today, Our only Hope. It’s a one off, not part of a series of six.

Read romans 2:1-16
**Introduction** Unpack it a bit today, but seems to have one theme, Judgement… ours and Gods, His Judgment and our hope.

Judgment on others, unfortunately has become a practice amongst some calling themselves followers of christ. Its been a negative in connecting with others for years. Robyn share with me that she hadn’t been near a church in over 30 years, because on the few occasions she did, she was judged, unfortunately for things she didn’t even know she was doing. Not saying the right words in response to a narration from the pulpit, not singing, maybe not wearing the right clothes. Its almost as if these churches assumed they had some sort of moral righteousness to tell others how to behave in their presence. Last week in Romans 1 is Paul showing us the darkness of the world’s rebellion against God, and a number of times Mark alluded to the idea of at least I am not like them.

Belindas story.

So the readers of Romans one, were listening and thinking, yep, that’s what they are like, those in the “world”..those outside of the kingdom. And to a degree, that’s fair, that is how the world was behaving, distanced from God, disobeying his ways and words, living for themselves, unrepentant and depraved. Pretty fair. I can imagine the head nodding and tsk tsk ing as this first chapter was being read. But… in Romans 2 turns the mirror around and says, “Now it’s your turn.”
We’re quick to nod in agreement when Paul condemns the immoral pagan world in chapter 1, but Paul won’t let us escape the reality that we too stand guilty before God’s judgment.
It’s like sitting in the gallery of a courtroom watching a guilty criminal be sentenced — and suddenly its your name the judge is calling to stand trial.

Because of the things I mentioned earlier, within Christian circles, the word Judgement has unfortunately gained some negative connotations. As it should when those passing Judgement are themselves imperfect and flawed..

But our loving father, God is perfect, we are his creations and his children. So when he passes judgement on us, it has a whole different flavour. A few of things about Gods Judgement.

**1. God’s Judgment Is Impartial (vv. 1–5)**

“You therefore have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else…” (v. 1) whats it there for.
Paul addresses the self-righteous — especially moralists and religious people who think they are better than “those sinners” from chapter 1.

The problem: We judge others while doing the same kinds of things in our hearts.

The danger: God’s judgment is based on truth (v. 2), not appearances or self-comparisons.

The warning: Every time we judge but don’t repent ourselves, we store up wrath for the day of God’s righteous judgment (v. 5)

Illustration: Think of a man who criticizes others for speeding while he himself drives 20 km over the limit every day — he’s condemning himself with his own standard. I find it hard to swallow when Christians may judge others for lifestyle choices like, smoking, drinking, swearing etc.. all things that have traditionally been associated with “pagans”.. the same Christians that judge, are not caring for widows and ofphans, welcoming strangers to our land, loving our neighbour, turning the other cheek, giving generously etc.. all behaviours that should be part of the lives of those following Jesus..

Gods judgement is impartial, and we will be judged by the measure we use, so if we use the sin of others, their lack of jesusness then that same criteria can be used to examine our lives and judge them. Something I want us to realise from these first few verses, we shouldn’t mistake God’s patience for His approval. His kindness and patience is meant to lead us to repentance, not complacency (v. 4).

Second thing about Gods Judgement… we good with establishing God has the right to Judge us? Its not to punish us but to lead us to repentance and a closer relationship with him… established that… ok second thing.

**2. God’s Judgment Is According to Works** (vv. 6–11) “God ‘will repay each person according to what they have done.’” (v. 6)
Theres an oldy but a goody, has some roots in what we find in the bible, “actions speak louder than words”. Paul isn’t teaching salvation by works — Romans will later make clear we are justified by faith alone. Something paul was very firm on, grace of god and salvation by faith, knowing that, I find it interesting he opens the book of Romans with two chapters about Judgement, almost like the foundation of the letter.. so whats going on. Paul lays out the principles that make up Gods judgement understand them, understand why he starts this letter with this idea.

Principles of God’s judgment: For those who persevere in doing good, seek to glorify and honour God —there will be eternal life (v. 7).
Those who self-seeking and reject the jesus or deny the need for him in their lives — there will be wrath and anger (v. 8).
Gods judgement shows no favoritism (v. 11). Whether Jew or Gentile, religious or irreligious, we all stand before the same holy Judge.

With those principles, all very practical in nature Gods judgment is framed and ultimately delivered. Our lives, our deeds reveal what we truly believe.

Actions affecting others and how they see God. A quote attributed to Ghandi I heard "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ." I wondered why he would say this so I did some research. While Gandhi was a practicing Hindu, Christianity intrigued him. In his reading of the Gospels, Gandhi was impressed by Jesus whom Christians worshiped and followed. He wanted to know more about this Jesus that Christians referred to as “the Christ, the Messiah.” One Sunday morning Gandhi decided that he would visit one of the Christian churches in Calcutta. Upon seeking entrance to the church sanctuary, he was stopped at the door by the ushers. He was told he was not welcome, nor would he be permitted to attend this particular church as it was for high-caste Indians and whites only. He was neither high caste, nor was he white. Because of the rejection, the Mahatma turned his back on Christianity.

Our actions our works can affect people more than our words, so it is them that Gods judgement is focussed on, Gods judgement is according to our works. V6 Fruit, produce in season, figs not from an olive tree etc.

3. **God’s Judgment Is According to the Light We’ve Been Given** (vv. 12–16) > “All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law…” (v. 12)
Paul anticipates an objection: “What about people who never heard the Law of Moses?” Those without the Law (Gentiles) will be judged apart from it — but they still have the law of conscience written on their hearts (vv. 14–15). Even in our world, we have secular laws based on the laws of God, non Christians have morals and values, in fact some of the greatest humanitarian action in history has been carried out by people who didn’t know God as their King.

Those with the Law (Jews) will be judged by that Law — and condemned if they break it.Paul is not saying, “Keep the law and you will be justified before God,” for that would contradict what he says elsewhere about being justified by faith alone ([Rom. 3:28](https://ref.ly/Rom.%203.28;nasb95?t=biblia), [5:1](https://ref.ly/Rom%205.1;nasb95?t=biblia), [Gal. 2:16](https://ref.ly/Gal.%202.16;nasb95?t=biblia), [21](https://ref.ly/Gal%202.21;nasb95?t=biblia)). Reminds me of the story of the rich young ruler, who asked Jesus, what must I do to have eternal life, what must I do to escape the judgement, the wrath I deserve, eternal spriritual death. Knew the law, obeyed all the commandments, but was called to action, it was by his actions, sell all you have and give it to the poor. … the action by which he would be judged, not his knowledge of the bible or obedience to Gods commands.

**Bottom line**: We’re all accountable because God has given us enough knowledge to know He exists, and we’ve all violated our own conscience at some point.

So what about the title of my sermon, the only hope, the star wars reference.

He is saying, “Hearing the law is not enough; you have to keep it—and none of you can.” Imperfect man cannot deliver a lifetime of perfect performance. Paul is not calling us to attempt the impossible; he’s trying to get us to admit defeat ([Rom. 3:20](https://ref.ly/Rom.%203.20;nasb95?t=biblia)). And this sounds like a hopless situation, and why would God appear to be setting us up to fail..because this leads us to the title of my sermon, Our only Hope, (v. 16) our only hope. “…God will judge people’s secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.”
Judgment isn’t just some Old Testament theme — it’s part of the gospel.

The bad news: All of us — moral, immoral, religious, or irreligious — are exposed before God’s perfect standard. We are judged by His measure, by him the measure of perfection, so we will never pass His judgement, all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. Not great news… here it is, the good news, the Gospel…

The good news: The Judge Himself has come in the person of Jesus Christ… and taken the penalty we deserve. God sent His son, to take our Judgment from Him, because being God in human form, he was perfect and therefore passed Gods Judgement.. we don’t have to, so we have hope, hope of being righteous enough to be in the presence of God. U see, its our sin that separates us, dirties us , keeps us from God. He judges us for this, hoping to bring us to the point where we give up, repent, I cant do this on my own, I need Jesus.

That is what repentance is, its getting to the point of exaceberation at our state, frustration at our weakness, disappointment at our hopelessness, of not being able to live our lives for Jesus perfectly, without judgment… that’s the point, we cant, we have no hope, but we have our only hope, Jesus. Because at the cross, God’s justice and mercy met. For those who trust Christ, judgment day has already happened — in Him.

Conclusion
Romans 2 strips away every excuse. It confronts the proud moralist, the devout religious person, and the open sinner alike.

If you are trusting in your morality hanging onto the hope of being good enough to get into heaven — give it up, repent and trust in Christ alone.

If you are hiding behind religion, a life of quoting scripture and attending church but knowing in your heart it’s a facade —give it up, repent and trust in Christ alone.

If you are ignoring God’s patience and think you can wait till later to start following Jesus fully — give it up, repent and trust in Christ alone

Let us flee from self-righteousness, cling to His mercy, and live lives that show we truly belong to Him, no longer hoping in ourselves, but in jesus, the new hope, our only hope.