

## Romans 2A (2017)

- Having put the introduction behind us, it's time to dive headlong into the theology of Paul's most important letter
  - We've heard Paul's introduction as he attempted to build a bridge with his audience in Rome
    - We heard his thesis in Block 2 of the outline, where Paul laid down the central message of his letter
    - His theme is found in vs.16-17 where Paul says the message of the Gospel is (or possesses) the power of God to save those who believe it
    - There is only this one message that saves, for it is sufficient for all men both Jew and Gentile
    - And it reveals the righteousness of God through our faith
  - In short, this is a letter about how anyone may become good enough to enter Heaven
    - Or as Paul says, how we may become righteous
    - This is a letter about righteousness
  - So now all that remains for Paul to do is to elaborate on how we may obtain the righteousness required for Heaven; by a message we call the Gospel
    - It's no small task
    - So it will require the better part of 15 chapters for Paul to do so
  - But before Paul even gets started, he moves first into a series of counter-arguments against false ways to become righteous before God
    - He refutes the claims of the four major categories of religious lies
    - All human religions can fit into one of these four categories
    - Paul will address these lies first before explaining the one true way God has provided for righteousness
- Block 3 begins in v.18 with Paul's opening statement concerning all false religion

- As we studied last week, Paul says that the wrath of God is to be revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness
  - Paul's saying that there is an unseen God prepared to hold humanity accountable for sin
  - He will hold us accountable because the existence of a true Creator God is undeniable
- Paul says the knowledge of God is self-evident being witnessed by our conscience
  - The knowledge of God is present in every person
  - That knowledge is general, not specific
  - Everyone has an instinctive understanding that a Creator God exists
  - But our instinct is insufficient to explain God completely and truly, as Solomon declared:

**[Eccl. 3:11](#) He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end.**

- Despite having been born with an instinctive knowledge of God, mankind is so desperately evil that we suppress this truth by substituting lies
  - And we call these lies we tell ourselves "religion"
    - Though we think a wide variety of religions exist, scripture teaches here in Romans that there are only 4 types of false religion
    - Within each type we can find countless variations
    - But those variations are meaningless...they are just playing with the details
    - So now Paul deals with the first of these four types: paganism (see chart)
  - The lie of paganism asserts that some part of Creation is our god
    - Pagans worship what they can see instead of the invisible God Who made it all

- Pagans are people who worship the sun, moon or stars (e.g., astrology)
- They may worship nature in various forms (e.g., mother nature, science)
- They may worship animals or people (e.g., reincarnation, cults)
- They may worship angels or aliens or demons or the devil himself
- Into this category, you can fit religions like Buddhism, Taoism, Hinduism, Unitarianism, Scientology, Zoroastrianism, Earth religion, humanism, astrology, Darwinism, etc.
- But the common denominator among all paganistic systems is worship of created things
  - In all cases, the pagan has suppressed the truth that these things have no power to create anything
  - Therefore, pagans conveniently overlook the question of where did everything come from?
  - They look only within Creation for their solution, and as a result they become increasingly foolish
- Paul explains the pagan fallacy next:

**[Rom. 1:20](#)** For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

**[Rom. 1:21](#)** For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

**[Rom. 1:22](#)** Professing to be wise, they became fools,

**[Rom. 1:23](#)** and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

**[Rom. 1:24](#)** Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

**[Rom. 1:25](#)** For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

- Paul walks his readers through the history of paganism and its effects on the heart of mankind

- Paganism owns the dubious distinction of being the first false religion man invented
  - Paganism traces its origins to the Tower of Babel, where Nimrod lead mankind for the first time into the worship of the Creation
  - The people declared they would come together in a city and construct a tower so tall its top would be in the heavens
- The subtext of that account in Genesis 11 is that people believed themselves powerful enough to define a new heaven for themselves
  - They declared let us make a name for ourselves
  - The Hebrew word for “name” is *shem*
  - And interestingly, God invested His seed promise in the man Shem, the son of Noah
  - So it seems as if the people are saying let us make our own “Shem”, that is our own way to God – and so paganism was born
- But remember, Chapter 11 of Genesis takes place after the Flood, almost 2,000 years after the fall of Adam
  - So mankind didn’t embrace worship of the creation right away
  - It took a while to get there, and Paul explains that process
- In the beginning, the reality of God was evident to all
  - Mankind beheld the glory of the Creation and understood that an all-powerful God had made it
    - But then a process of spiritual deterioration began
    - The catalyst for this process, of course, was the fall of Adam and the curse that God pronounced on Creation
    - The fallen state of mankind didn’t just put his soul in mortal jeopardy
    - It also placed a cancer in our hearts, one that slowly robbed us of our ability to truly know God
  - Paul says that in the beginning, men knew God
    - Men like Cain knew God and even sacrificed to Him as we read in Genesis 4

- But as the account of Cain illustrates well, these men did not honor God nor continue with an attitude of thankfulness
- Instead, they became futile in their speculations
- “Futile” could be translated vanity, so in vanity they began to speculate
- They substitute opinions of God for the truth of what they knew
- And in time this process of substituting foolish speculations for the truth darkened the human heart
  - The truth of God is light to our soul
  - But when we push that light away, rejecting truth and instead choosing to believe opinions and speculations about God, we grow more foolish
- And we lose the ability to find our way back
  - Imagine someone in complete darkness with a single candle for light
  - Then they begin walking away from the candle in the darkness
  - In time, they will find themselves so far from the candle they can’t see it any longer
  - And in the darkness, they can’t find their way back to the light
  - Mankind made a similar journey, spiritually speaking
- So in v.22, Paul says mankind was professing to be wise yet they became foolish
  - The word “professing” means to make an assertion
    - Anyone can assert anything
    - But our assertions are not automatically truth
    - Just because someone in a small group Bible study declares “what this verse means to me is...” doesn’t mean they know what it means
    - In fact, that statement almost always precedes a foolish statement

- From darkened, foolish hearts, mankind continued its downward decent in v.23
  - The next step in this spiral is to exchange the glory of a creator God for a lie, the lie of paganism
  - They began worshipping and serving created things
- Among the things we worship instead of God include corruptible man, birds, four-legged creatures and even crawling creatures
  - Notice the progression within that list
  - First men traded worship of God for God's greatest creation, man
  - That was bad enough, for it should have been obvious that there was no man worth worshipping since all are corrupted
- But mankind's decent into foolishness didn't stop there
  - We moved to worshipping birds, which are lower than mankind
    - They can't even think and talk, like us, yet we think they are superior to us?
    - But at least they can fly
  - But we moved from them to dumb four-legged animals that can't talk, can't think, and can't even fly
    - Bulls, goats, jackels, cats, etc.
    - The worst, of course, is poodle worship, for which there is no hope of redemption
  - Lastly, mankind began to worship the least of creation: insects
    - Paul's point is to mock the stupidity and foolishness of a heart that walks away from God
    - We can't shake our instinctive desire to worship something, but our spiritual blindness directs us to fulfill that need in the strangest ways
    - Including calling bugs our gods
  - And even our so-called sophisticated modern world has continued this decent

- In Paul's day, the worst he had seen was worshipping insects
- But today you can find people worshipping rocks and trees
- We've moved to the most meaningless parts of Creation
- All this pagan foolishness would be laughable except that it produces such devastating consequences within society
  - In v.24 Paul explains the next step down this decent into oblivion
    - He says the Lord gave men over to their lusts so they would dishonor their bodies
    - We could rephrase Paul's statement this way:
      - Because they walked away from the light, the Lord gave them over to their dark desires so that would suffer the consequences together
  - Mankind came to this point because it exchanged the Creator for the lie of paganism
    - Paul uses the word "exchanged" to reflect that men made this trade willingly
    - Mankind began with a knowledge of God yet they chose to trade it for something less
    - So that in future generations, mankind had forgotten they ever possessed God in the first place
  - That exchange then set the stage for our lustful desires to plunge mankind into ruin
    - Elevating the creation above the Creator amplifies the importance of physical things over spiritual things
    - As physical things increase in importance to us, we will give physical needs priority over spiritual needs such that the flesh will begin to rule
    - Ultimately, fulfilling our body's desire becomes the end purpose of life rather than pleasing the Creator
  - This leads mankind to devolve in our flesh in the same way we devolved in our spirit

- Just as mankind's worship started with God but ended with rocks and trees...
- Similarly, our physical lusts descend into increasing depravity

**Rom. 1:26** For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

**Rom. 1:27** and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

**Rom. 1:28** And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

**Rom. 1:29** being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips,

**Rom. 1:30** slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

**Rom. 1:31** without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

**Rom. 1:32** and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

- Once again, God gave mankind over to passions that dishonor or degrade the person
  - He allowed mankind's physical condition to find its bottom just as He did for our spiritual condition
    - And what is the low-water mark for mankind physically?
    - When men and women trade the natural sexual desire for that which is unnatural
  - Of course, Paul is speaking of homosexuality behavior, except that word didn't exist in Paul's day
    - Society had not yet given this behavior such a respectable word
    - In Paul's day, it was simply described as he does here
    - And this is Paul's example of the worst form of human foolishness and rebellion
  - Today, it's become fashionable to assert that homosexuality is compatible with Christianity

- Paul calls such acts indecent, which literally means shameless
- They are shameless in the sense that society no longer considers the acts to be cause for shame but rather approves them
- Despite this our Lord condemns such behavior in the strongest of terms in various places in scripture
  - Prior to the Law, the Lord showed His displeasure with this type of conduct by judging Sodom and Gomorrah with fire from heaven
  - In the Law, the Lord called for the death penalty for those who might practice it in Israel
  - And in the New Testament, the Word of God condemns it in the strongest terms, as you see here
- But there is always a consequence for sin, and Paul says the consequence for this type of sin will be a due penalty received in their own person
  - Due penalty refers to those necessary, inevitable outcomes
  - These aren't specific judgments of God but rather the natural consequences of going against God's design for Creation
- People who engage in these things risk receiving the due penalties in their persons
  - Persons refers to all aspects of their being: spiritual, emotional, and physical
  - And of course, history has shown Paul's words to be true as evidence for the devastating consequences of this perversion continues to pile up
- Then notice in v.28 Paul moves one step further to detailing the consequences for accepting such depravity
  - The Lord gives mankind over to a depraved mind
  - The word "depraved" means not standing the test or unapproved
  - So once more, the Lord allowed mankind to experience the consequences of their darkened hearts and perverse choices
  - The end of which is a mind that cannot stand the test, that is unapproved

- In other words, our minds can no longer grasp what is good and proper
- Our every thought is evil
- Glancing through vs.29-31 we find a succinct and accurate description of the society in which we live today
  - These are the due penalties inflicted upon society for their paganism
  - Having elevated the creation above the Creator, mankind engaged in lustful pursuits of the unnatural
  - And the polluting of our bodies leads to a polluting of our minds with the result that society is filled with the traits Paul lists
- The Bible is not claiming that homosexuality was the direct cause of these things
  - Rather Paul is drawing a conclusion about any culture that embraces perversion
  - The same social forces that render homosexuality acceptable will also lead to the acceptance of other forms of depravity
  - Before long greed, malice, wickedness, arrogance, disobedience to parents and all manner of evil will become the norm
  - These societal woes are all the result of the deteriorating spiritual condition of mankind according to the pattern of the first lie:

### Knowing God → Worshipping Physical Creation → Lusting → Depravity → Wickedness

- Finally, Paul reminds us that all these behaviors are worthy of death according to the Creator, the author of the Law
  - So the great irony of paganism is that while pagans have forgotten God, God has not forgotten them
    - Despite paganism's determination to push God aside, the wrath of God will be revealed against them for their evil deeds
    - And notice at the end of the verse that death isn't just deserved for those who practice such things
    - But also for those who approve of such things

- Today very few people, statistically-speaking, engage in the kind of depravity Paul describes
  - But very many approve of such things believing them to be good
  - They celebrate those who practice it
  - And Paul says any society who agrees with such things is as guilty as those who practice it
- How do we preach the gospel to these two camps of religious deception?
  - For the paganist, the question must be what came before what is and who made it?
    - The best appeal for a paganism is the appeal of a Creator God, as Paul explained
    - Paul follows this model elsewhere as he confronted paganism

**Acts 14:8** At Lystra a man was sitting who had no strength in his feet, lame from his mother's womb, who had never walked.

**Acts 14:9** This man was listening to Paul as he spoke, who, when he had fixed his gaze on him and had seen that he had faith to be made well,

**Acts 14:10** said with a loud voice, "Stand upright on your feet." And he leaped up and began to walk.

**Acts 14:11** When the crowds saw what Paul had done, they raised their voice, saying in the Lycaonian language, "The gods have become like men and have come down to us."

**Acts 14:12** And they began calling Barnabas, Zeus, and Paul, Hermes, because he was the chief speaker.

**Acts 14:13** The priest of Zeus, whose temple was just outside the city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, and wanted to offer sacrifice with the crowds.

**Acts 14:14** But when the apostles Barnabas and Paul heard of it, they tore their robes and rushed out into the crowd, crying out

**Acts 14:15** and saying, "Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and preach the gospel to you that you should turn from these vain things to a living God, who made the heaven and the earth and the sea and all that is in them.

**Acts 14:16** "In the generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways;

**Acts 14:17** and yet He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good and gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, satisfying your hearts with food and gladness."

[Acts 14:18](#) Even saying these things, with difficulty they restrained the crowds from offering sacrifice to them.

- Paul's appeal was to bring their attention to the origins of the very things they worshipped
- So the first religious lie, paganism, asserts that the creation is God
  - That lie gave license for mankind to amplify the importance of the physical world over the spiritual world
    - Inevitably, their pursuit of the physical triggered lusts which lead to greater and greater depravity
    - And a culture of depravity opened the door for all manner of sin over time
  - Self-evidently, paganism does not and cannot lead to righteousness
    - In fact, it appeals to the worst side of our nature
    - So that it increases depravity and unrighteousness
    - Which rightly deserves the Creator's wrath
- So one lie down, three to go...

[Rom. 2:1](#) Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

[Rom. 2:2](#) And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

[Rom. 2:3](#) But do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment on those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God?

- Notice, Paul moves into the second category of false religion: moralism
  - Moralism is the practice of making judgments about one's or others' righteousness
    - In effect, moralism is making ourselves the judge over both ourself and others

- And based on the judgments we make, we assume God will follow suit as if we know the mind of God
- Moralism is the second great religious lie after paganism
- Paul transitions with the connecting word “therefore”
  - He connects his earlier discussion with this new topic, so how are paganism and moralism connected?
  - Paganism gave rise to lust and depravity but not everyone in society participates to the same degree in these behaviors
  - The worst are pursuing unnatural lusts, while others are merely condoning it
- So this gives rise to judgments
  - In a depraved society, mankind can begin to make distinctions between the good, the bad and the ugly
  - These moral judgments are relativistic and we make them according to our advantage
  - Like the young ruler who called Jesus good teacher
- But notice Paul says to his readers that “you” have no excuse for your sin
  - Paul is speaking to everyone because everyone is guilty
    - Paul says that as we judge others we condemn ourselves
    - When we judge someone, we’re deciding that this person is unrighteous and therefore they are due a penalty
    - But when you make that determination, you are implying that standards for righteousness exist
    - You can’t say someone is doing something wrong (in your view) without also agreeing that rules for right and wrong exist
  - So if you judge others, then you acknowledge that standards for righteous exist, and those standards are not your own
    - Self-evidently, we didn’t make rules for society
    - And we certainly don’t decide who enters Heaven

- Yet we speak confidently that those who practice terrible things are due a penalty
- Which means we know there is a lawgiver Who must judge these things
- And logically, if we are acknowledging the existence of a lawgiver and a Law that must be followed, then we have condemned ourselves
  - Because as Paul says we have practiced the very same things that we accuse others of doing
  - Obviously, we haven't all committed exactly the same deeds
  - But we share a great many of the same offenses
- And even beyond our actions, we share the same heart desires
  - Not all of us have killed a person, but we've all wished someone dead
  - Not all of us have stolen, but we've all longed for something we didn't possess
  - Not all of us have committed infidelity, but most have been attracted by the possibility
- How do we pass judgment so easily then?
  - Passing judgment always involves making comparison, and moralism involves making wrong comparisons that favor our ego
    - We judge someone who commits a certain sin by comparing them to ourselves
    - Since we have never committed that particular sin, we can feel good about ourselves in making that comparison
    - And we can feel right in judging the person who fell
  - If we share their sin, then we judge them for having a more severe case, or worse consequences, or even a less repentant heart, compared to us
    - Whatever way we can compare ourselves favorably, we'll find it
    - And as we find it, we find cause to declare ourselves righteous
    - We draw the line between righteous and unrighteousness in that small crack that separates us from that "bad" person

- And we take comfort that, once again, we're on the right side of the line
- Of course, this line moves daily
  - As long as the moralist can find someone who is worse than we are, then we are safe
  - And the very fact that life seems to be going so well for us is our proof that our methodology is working
- Moralism finds its reassurance in the way they avoid the worst of society
  - The moralist may have been convicted of cheating on taxes, but at least he didn't defraud millions like those evil men at Enron
  - The moralist may have dumped used motor oil in his backyard, but at least he didn't pollute the Alaskan coast like Exxon
  - The moralist may have cheated on his wife, but at least he didn't have sex with another man
  - The moralist may have killed someone, but at least he didn't murder six million like Hitler!
- The moralist can always find a comparison that affirms he is righteous enough to warrant heaven
  - So if you think you are good enough because you are better than Hitler, then ask yourself this...
    - Do you think Hitler was a liar? Yes...but have you ever lied?
    - Do you think Hitler ever spoke a hateful thought? Of course... but have you?
    - Do you suppose Hitler ever stole or deceived someone? Or coveted or betrayed or insulted someone? Undoubtedly...
    - But haven't you done these very same things too?
  - And of course Hitler also murdered, and perhaps you have never committed murder
    - But is that what you're resting on when you say you're better than Hitler?

- You can share every manner of sin with the man, but because you find one difference that justifies your superior place?
- Are you willing to rest on that difference? Are you confident that God's standard requires that *only* mass murderers go to Hell?
- That's why Paul asks in v.3 do you suppose, O moralist, that you will escape the judgment of God?
  - God is the Author of the Law and the Creator of all things under His Law, and therefore He will judge all things according to His standard
    - Simply put, it's His Heaven, so He gets to decide the standard for entry
    - And unlike the moralist, the judgment of God is unbiased
  - Why has the moralist "supposed" he will escape judgment someday? Because the moralist assumes God's lack of response to date is proof all is well
    - Ask a moralist if he or she is afraid of death or the judgment that follows, and he will probably tell you no
    - He will tell you that he has no reason to fear, because he is a "good person"
    - The fact that his life is going the way he desires and he has avoided disaster is evidence that he is making "right" choices
    - Sometimes people express this concept as "karma"
    - It leads to greater confidence in their self-righteousness and a heartless, judgmental attitude towards others
  - So the lie of moralism is that righteousness is a sliding scale, and we can be our own judge
    - We judge ourselves as basically good people, good enough to get to heaven
    - And we find confidence in our assumptions because our life is going well, God seems pleased with us and is rewarding us with a good life
    - When we see people suffering, we tell ourselves they did something wrong and are getting what they deserved

- And we take satisfaction in knowing that the truly bad people are going to hell
- But Paul says things are not as they seem for the moralist

**Rom. 2:4** Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and tolerance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance?

**Rom. 2:5** But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God,

**Rom. 2:6** who will render to each person according to his deeds:

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

- The moralist is thinking lightly of the riches of the kindness, tolerance and patience of God
  - The word for tolerance can be translated delaying
    - God, in His kindness, is delaying addressing the sin of the moralist
    - And the word for patience is also translated long-suffering
    - So while God waits to see you at your judgment, he's suffering watching you take His patience for granted
  - The moralist takes for granted their good life, and he views the absence of God's judgment as confirmation he is righteous
    - But God's delay is not an endorsement
    - It's kindness from God intended as an opportunity for repentance
  - When the moralist dies and faces the righteous judgment of God, he or she will realize that those good years were wasted, Paul says in v.5
    - Paul contracts the moralist's self-serving judgment with the judgment of God which will be righteous
    - God doesn't grade on the curve
    - We won't get by with the nonsense we tell ourselves; how we're good enough because we're not the worst we could be

- Paul says that as the moralist tells himself he is safe, in reality he is storing up wrath for his day of judgment
  - Imagine we could measure God's wrath in increments, like filling a measuring cup with wrath
    - Paul uses that idea to remind the moralist that his good days on earth should not give him confidence going into his judgment
    - For as each sinful day passes, the moralist's sins don't go unnoticed by God
  - The wrath those sins warrant is being stored up
    - The Lord is delaying bringing His wrath, but only for a time
    - Meanwhile, the moralist believes he has avoided wrath simply because he hasn't seen anything happen yet
  - But as Paul quotes from Proverbs, the Lord will render a judgment for each man that fully reflects that person's deeds
    - Each man's life is storing up something
    - God's judgment of us is connected to our deeds
    - This is a general principle guiding God's judgment
- Paul then gives contrasts of how believers and unbelievers store up for eternity
  - In v.7 Paul says that when God judges the believer, the Lord will assign reward according to our service to God
    - If the believer perseveres in doing good, seeking glory and honor, then that person is storing up eternal life
    - Now at first hearing, that conclusion sounds wrong to us, especially since Paul says later that works do not earn salvation
    - But remember, Paul's talking about judgments, and the only judgment believers face is the Judgment seat of Christ
  - So v.7 is describing the judgment God makes of believers for the assigning of reward, not for determining if we may receive salvation
    - Concerning that judgment, we are storing up eternal life
    - Or we could say we are determining the nature of our eternal life

- The more we serve, the more good deeds we accomplish, the more there will be waiting for us there
- But then Paul moves to the other side, when the Lord judges the unbelieving

[Rom. 2:8](#) but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.

[Rom. 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,

[Rom. 2:10](#) but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

[Rom. 2:11](#) For there is no partiality with God.

- The Lord will render punishment to unbelievers according to the degree of a person's sinful deeds
  - The worse the sins a person commits during their life on Earth, the worse the punishment will be
    - So we can take some satisfaction knowing that the "Hitlers" of the world will get what they have coming
    - But that will be little satisfaction to those who find themselves at the "cooler" end of Hell's furnace
    - God's wrath will be unbearable regardless, and all men should seek to be rescued from the just penalty their sins deserve
  - The sold-out moralist isn't bothered by that arrangement
    - He's already convinced he will get a passing grade
    - He's told himself that his days are filled with good deeds and he has conveniently overlooked his sins
  - That's the conceit of the moralist
    - He has declared himself to be righteous and expects God to agree with his decision
    - The moralist has an unrealistic view of sin, both of others and himself
- So the second great religious lie follows naturally from the first

- As paganism gave rise to an increasingly evil and depraved society, it produced opportunity for men to distance themselves, one from another
  - Some declared themselves to be better than others
  - It became possible to make judgments of “good” and “bad”
  - Which gave rise to a pecking order of morality within society
- But that pecking order was self-serving and relativistic and not at all according to the standard God uses
  - So while men were judging themselves above God’s wrath, they were only fooling themselves
  - God has been watching them as they sin, storing up wrath
  - And one day the Lord will bring that wrath according to their deeds
- Finally, how do we appeal to the moralist?
  - The moralist must come to appreciate his or her own sin and that the standard of God is exact, unbending and not in their favor
    - The best lesson for the moralist is the one Jesus taught the young ruler which we covered last week
    - There is no one good but God alone
    - And unless we equal the goodness of God, we cannot receive what is His
  - Remember how that encounter ended?

**Luke 18:20** “You know the commandments, ‘Do not commit adultery, Do not murder, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honor your father and mother.’”

**Luke 18:21** And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”

**Luke 18:22** When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.”

**Luke 18:23** But when he had heard these things, he became very sad, for he was extremely rich.

**Luke 18:24** And Jesus looked at him and said, “How hard it is for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!

[Luke 18:25](#) "For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

[Luke 18:26](#) They who heard it said, "Then who can be saved?"

[Luke 18:27](#) But He said, "The things that are impossible with people are possible with God."

- Jesus knowing the man was expecting to work his way to Heaven, played along with him at first
  - He gave the man a list of works to perform to enter Heaven
  - The man, a moralist, responded he liked what he was hearing
  - In his mind, he judged himself successful against all those commandments
- The Lord intentionally picked commandments that were likely to please the man, since these rules were among the most severe
  - The man says he has kept them from his youth, meaning as far back as could remember
  - Again, his standard was that he felt good about himself, not that God did
- So Jesus lowers the boom asking the man to do something not found in the Law at all
  - He tells him to sell everything to bless the poor so that he may receive a rich reward in Heaven
  - But this was too much to ask, and so the man left very sad
  - Notice he didn't leave angry or defensive
  - He didn't argue the point, because he knew instinctively that Jesus was asking for something "good"
- The man simply couldn't agree to those terms, and in that way Jesus exposed his biased scale
  - The man had judged himself worthy of eternal life using a scale tipped in his favor
  - But when Jesus changed the scale, the man wouldn't (not couldn't, but wouldn't) meet the terms
  - Of course, he wasn't truly innocent of those other laws either

- But rather than getting into an debate with the man over his past imperfections, Jesus simply exposed his hypocrisy
- So the answer for the moralist is that we expose his hypocrisy by explaining from scripture what the true standard is for entry into Heaven
  - It is to meet God's standard
    - As Jesus says:

[Matt. 5:48](#) "Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."