

UNDETECTED ADDICTION

Illustration: The Avengers

- Two of my favorite characters in the Marvel movie series are Hawkeye and Black Widow.
- What I love about them is that unlike all the other heroes these two have nothing supernatural about them.
- They don't have superhuman strength like Thor, Captain America, or the Hulk.
- They don't have a super human suit of armor like Ironman.
- They're just highly skilled human operatives.
- If you have watched all of the Marvel movies there is a really cool friendship between the two of them oozes the story of redemption.
- Let me give one example
 - In the first Avenger movie, Loki, the bad guy, turns Hawkeye to follow him with the power of an infinity stone that he has mounted in his staff.
 - Hawkeye basically becomes a zombie slave to Loki, kills a bunch of people and wreaks havoc on a giant flying aircraft carrier that the Avengers are on.
 - When he faces off with Black Widow he is trying to kill her, but she is trying to save him.
 - The reason that she has compassion on him is because she realizes he is not being himself, but it went deeper than that
 - She had been an operative for an evil man who was trying to take over the world using brainwashed female operatives and when she realized that she was on the wrong side of the fight, it was Hawkeye who had shown her mercy and helped her to break away from that madman.
 - It was the mercy shown to her that gave her the compassion to see Hawkeye with the same mercy.

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- I'll come back to this story, but for now I just want us to consider that when we truly experience mercy it makes us more merciful and gracious to others.
- Drue mentioned last week that Romans starts with bad news.
 - From the middle of chapter 1 to the middle of chapter 3 it's nothing but bad news.
 - We're in chapter 2, which is just all bad news
 - I think Drue did that to me on purpose, but I'm no prophet.
- As Drue mentioned, we're not doing a deep dive into the book of Romans, but we're trying to *highlight the main themes* in order to bring some clarity for us as we study it together.
- So my sermon outline is NOT an outline of the chapter.
- I want to highlight what I believe are the main points so that as you read it, it will make more sense.

Good News Sandwich

- Context
- Indictment
- Impact
- Conclusion

Context

- Last week Drue really emphasized this verse.
- Romans 1:16–17 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is **the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes**: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”

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Illustration: Gospel Wedge

- When we come to Christ we begin a journey in which we grow in our understanding of two things.
 - God's Holiness and Our sinfulness.
- What's hard about this is that the longer we walk with Him the greater our awareness of the gap that separates us.
- The really good news is that the cross also grows in our minds.
- The more we see our sin and God's holiness the more precious the love of Christ becomes to us.
- Here's the craziest and coolest part about the gospel.
- Even though our flesh is getting worse, God in Christ has lifted us up to be in His family which positionally puts us at the top of this diagram with the Holiness of God.
- The more we grow in our understanding of our sin and His holiness, the more we rejoice in the greatness of the gospel.
- We never outlive our need for the gospel.
- We grow deeper into our love of the gospel.
- I wanted us to see this because I want us to understand what Paul is doing in Romans 2.
- Paul's goal is to **dismantle** EVERY notion that we might have about our own righteousness
- His goal is to STRIP us of self-righteousness and self-reliance.
- If we think that we can be righteous on our own, then we don't need Him.
- If we don't need Him, then we won't seek Him.
- If we don't seek Him, we won't experience the Joy that He adopted us to experience.



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- The whole reason that Paul is diving so deep into all the ways we fail is so that we will stop trying so hard to fix ourselves and learn to trust Jesus every day for every moment.
- That's the path of true and lasting JOY
- And *When* we experience mercy, our compassion grows.

Primary Passage

Romans 2:1–6 (NASB95)

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. ² And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. 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? 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? 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, ⁶ who will render to each person according to his deeds:

Indictment

- They were **Judgmental about things they themselves did**
- 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***.
 - It's quite possible that they weren't doing exactly what the world is doing.
 - But they were doing the same things (plural)
 - One of the sins that Drue pointed out in Romans 1 was the sin of homosexuality.

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- There may be some in this room who struggle with same sex attraction, but probably most of you don't...However, we have all given in to Sinful Desires, Shameful Lusts, Depraved Thinking.
- Paul is calling them out. You judge people for specific areas of sins, but you do the same things in a different form
- This is a the definition of hypocrisy. They are judging people for sinful practices when they were involved in sinful practices.
- They were **Flippant about His grace** -
 - 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?
 - The Christians in Rome were enjoying certain blessings, but they didn't recognize those blessings as acts of **Mercy**
 - They thought those blessings were deserved not recognizing that they were actually an extension of God's kindness, tolerance, and patience.
- They were **Proud of their superior heritage as Jews**
 - Later in the chapter Paul specifically calls out the Jews, who had grown up with God's Word.
 - In today's terms, they were churched.
 - Romans 2:17–18, 23 (NIV) ¹⁷ Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; ¹⁸ if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law...²³ You who boast in the law, **do you dishonor God by breaking the law?**
 - They were proud of their knowledge of God and his word, but they weren't following it.
- They were **Unrepentant** about their own sin.
 - ⁵ But because of your stubbornness and **unrepentant heart** you are storing up wrath for yourself

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- They were judgemental, flippant, and full of pride, but their was no sorry over their sin.

Application:

Let's bring the principles home in a way that relates to us a little more than talking about the law and circumcision.

- The *core problem* that Paul is talking about here can be wrapped up in one word: **Self-Righteousness**
- Isn't that the heart of the matter?
- At their core they were being self-righteous about their knowledge or obedience to certain aspects of the law, but they weren't seeing their own sinfulness or hypocrisy.

Illustrations: Let me share some examples of how we do this today.

- **JOB RIGHTEOUSNESS:** I'm a harder worker than my co-workers, so God should reward me.
- **FAMILY RIGHTEOUSNESS:** Because I "do things right" as a parent, I'm more godly than parents who can't control their kids.
- **THEOLOGICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS:** I have good theology. God prefers me over those who have bad theology.
- **INTELLECTUAL RIGHTEOUSNESS:** I am better read, more articulate, and more culturally savvy than others, which obviously makes me superior.
- **MERCY RIGHTEOUSNESS:** I care about the poor and disadvantaged the way everyone else should.
- **MORAL RIGHTEOUSNESS:** I don't drink, smoke, or chew, or date girls who do. Too many Christians just aren't concerned about holiness these days.
- **FINANCIAL RIGHTEOUSNESS:** I manage money wisely and stay out of debt. I'm not like those materialistic Christians who can't control their spending.

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- **TOLERANCE RIGHTEOUSNESS**: I am open-minded and charitable toward those who don't agree with me. In fact, I'm a lot like Jesus that way!
- **POLITICAL RIGHTEOUSNESS**: If you really love God, you'll vote for my candidate. You're less of a person in my mind because you voted that differently.
- **CHURCH HURT RIGHTEOUSNESS**: I was wronged by a church and I will never forgive them for it and if I'm honest I blame God for what they did. I would never treat people that way.

Every time I share this list someone comes up to me and says, I have another one for you. The truth is we create new ones every day.

Impact

- God's Name is **Blasphemed**
 - Romans 2:23–24 (NASB95) ²³ You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? ²⁴ For “the name of **God is blasphemed among the Gentiles** because of you,” just as it is written.
 - It caused the gentiles to want nothing to do with God condemning them to eternity in hell
 - It dishonors the very God that they thought they were being obedient to and God's name was being blasphemed.
 - We love to say “I'm not perfect, I'm forgiven.”
 - That is true, but my friends, that is often used as an excuse and Paul is condemning that excuse very strongly here.
 - We cannot be ok with the impact of our religious pretension
- God's Anger is **Inflamed**
 - Romans 2:5-6 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

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of God, ⁶ who will render to each person according to his deeds:

- Do you remember Jesus' words about the judgmental Pharisees when he was on earth?
- Matthew 23: 15, 27 ¹⁵ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel across sea and land to make a single proselyte, and when he becomes a proselyte, you make him **twice as much a child of hell as yourselves.** ²⁷ "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like **whitewashed tombs**, which outwardly appear beautiful, but within are full of dead people's bones and all uncleanness.

Application:

Illustration: Elder gives up

- I preached a sermon a few years ago on Legalism that had a lot of overlap with this one. One of the leaders of the church told me later that week that he was deeply convicted of his judgmentalism and that it was a wake up call.
- About 3 week later I asked him how he was coming along in his fight with judgmentalism. He told me that he had given up the fight because he just couldn't stop.
- Do you know what I did? I judged him for years because of that.

Here's what is so insidious about self-righteousness

- We don't feel ashamed or convicted about it.
 - Why? Because it's often based on truth. It's easy to see other people's sin and here's the thing... it usually is sin.
 - We feel justified and right. We feel powerful and smart.
- When we put other people down in our hearts it makes us feel better about ourselves.
- Self-righteousness doesn't make us feel bad.
- It doesn't make us feel convicted of sin.

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- **It makes us feel good. It makes us feel right.**
- I am convinced that that feeling is EVERY BIT as ADDICTIVE as Pornography or alcoholism or gluttony or any other addiction.
- We are all self-righteous and we like it because it makes us FEEL GOOD.
- We are recovering pharisees.

Conclusion

There is an unstated, but I believe very clear call to repentance in this chapter. The word *repentance* can be a very scary thing and it is usually seen as negative. **How does the cross impact how we view repentance?**

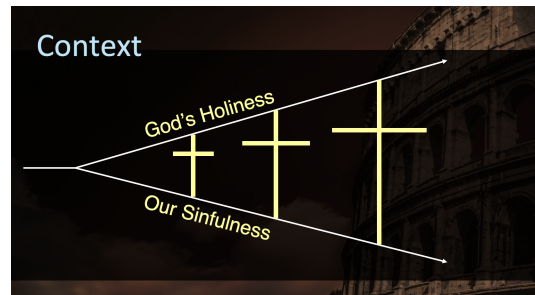


Illustration: Let's go back to the story of Black Widow in the Avengers.

- Can you imagine after years of manipulating and killing people for a madman, what it would have felt like for her to change sides.
- Who was she going to turn to?
- Who on the good side was going to see past all of her crimes and forgive her?
- And even if someone did show her compassion, how was she going to change a lifetime of evil habits.
- That's why she treasured Hawkeye's friendship so much.
- He was the "Christ" figure in her life.
- He redeemed her when no one else would.
- He helped her turn her life around completely.
- At the end she sacrifices her life to save everyone else.

So let me ask again. **How does the cross impact how we view repentance?**

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- 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?**
- Jesus showed us the greatest mercy of all.
- While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.
- While we were still self-righteous, Christ died for us.
- And now he sits at the right hand of God and continues to advocate on our behalf.
- Repentance scares us because we still believe that we have to fix ourselves and many of us have really tried for decades.
- But repentance isn't about turning away from our sin in order to behave better.
- Repentance is about laying all of our sins at the feet of Jesus because we know that we will be met with MERCY and we know that HIS power can change us.
- If we do that, many years from now we will suddenly realize that we're a lot less judgemental than we used to be as well.