

Romans 2:8

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/rom/rom-2/romans-28/>

God's judgment comes for both the good and the bad things we do on this earth. For the believer, this is not a judgment related to heaven and hell, but concerns our place in heaven/the new earth based on how we lived and pursued righteousness on the present earth.

It is interesting here to contrast self-interest with *selfish ambition*. *Selfish ambition* is clearly not in our self-interest as it leads to *wrath and indignation* (v 8). The previous verse (2:7) makes clear that the opposite of selfish ambition is patiently continuing to do good, *but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness*, their reward will be *wrath and indignation* (vs 8).

Serving others is tedious and often we get little thanks or even are reviled for doing so in this life. If we continue to do good, we gain enormous benefits—in God's timing. In chapters 12–16, Paul will make clear that the reason doing good requires patience is because doing good means we should serve others with the gifts and opportunities which God allows.

Often, people who live in poverty remain in that state due to a lack of aptitude in understanding the perspective of making investments. Investments of time or money have a natural time delay; time passes between the investment and the return. That means we are worse off after making the investment, but we made the investment in hope of a good return.

Some who do not understand the perspective of stewardship or investing may give up much of their salary for a "payday loan" in order to get the money a few days early. They pay a very high interest rate, rather than defer spending until their actual payday. People who become financially wealthy do so because they have the ability to invest and wait for a return.

The notion in Romans 2:7–11 is that the ultimate investment we make in life is how we invest our time and energy, and that investment matures at our judgment day. Just as patient continuance in doing good will result in glory, honor, and a lasting remembrance from the Creator of all things (vs 7), *selfish ambition* and an unwillingness to *obey the truth* (v 8) also produce a reward, but not a happy one.

Here, *selfish ambition* is translated from the Greek word "*eritheia*." According to one resource, this word is found in extra-biblical sources primarily in the writings of the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who used the word to describe a politician seeking office through unscrupulous means—making "selfish ambition" an excellent translation. In Philippians 2:3, "*eritheia*" is also translated "selfish ambition" and is contrasted with "lowliness of mind" and esteeming others

above ourselves. A lasting spiritual wealth beyond our wildest dreams is promised if we are willing to make an investment in other people, esteeming their needs above our own.

In the New Heaven and Earth, God comes to earth, all tears are wiped away, and there is no more sorrow or pain (Revelation 21:1–4). Prior to this, several things must be sorted out, among them the final vanquishing of death and Hades, both of which are thrown into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:14–15). Another is the judgment of all men (vv 5–6).

Even though believers and unbelievers have different destinies, it appears that every person has his deeds evaluated, and *selfish ambition* will be judged harshly. *Selfish ambition* is described as one who is *obeying unrighteousness* and *wrath* (v 8). The negative reward from God for *selfish ambition* is described as *wrath and indignation* (v 8). The twin terms *wrath and indignation* might be thought of as anger (for disobedience) and consequences (resulting from that disobedience).

So the results will be unpleasant if we only seek short term, worldly gain for ourselves. We then stand to lose getting the immense benefits from investing wisely in other people. The Greek word, translated “*wrath*” here is “*orge*,” the same one in Romans 13:4, where human government is said to execute the wrath of God upon someone who breaks the law. This wrath is a discipline to bring a citizen or resident back into line.

The Greek word translated “*indignation*” is “*thymos*,” which also appears in Acts 19 to describe the reaction of the silver artisans in Ephesus who derived their livelihood from fashioning images of the goddess Diana, when a silversmith named Demetrius gave a speech to his fellow smiths, declaring that if people follow the Apostle Paul's teaching they will no longer revere Diana and will cease purchasing their wares.

The other smiths were incensed—“How dare this man!” They were agitated at Paul for abusing something to which they assigned great value. It seems apparent that God gives great value to His creation and to the people He creates, so perhaps here it indicates the severe displeasure God will have for anyone who receives the wonderful gifts He gives them only to squander them on *selfish ambition*.

This passage does not elaborate on what form the chastisement of God might take. Similarly, the passage does not specifically describe what is meant by “the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.” But God’s displeasure toward self-seeking behavior makes it abundantly clear that choosing such a course of action is a very bad path with very severe adverse consequences.

This passage in Romans seems to paint the same basic picture as Jesus did when He stated in the Sermon on the Mount:

“Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and there are many who enter through it. For the gate is small and the way is narrow that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

(Matthew 7:13-14)

Biblical Text

8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation.