

**The Book of Romans**  
**2:12-16**  
**9/26/2018 Wednesday PM**

**Romans 2:12-16**

<sup>12</sup>All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. <sup>13</sup>For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. <sup>14</sup>(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, <sup>15</sup>since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) <sup>16</sup>This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

- Last week we looked at vv. 1-11 where Paul shifted his attention to the Jews in the audience that were believing they were above the judgment of God because of their birth into a Jewish home.
- Paul detailed how everyone would be judged according to God's "righteous judgment."
- In vv. 12-16, Paul is expounding on his teaching in this area and introduces the people to the Law and how it plays into everyone's judgement.
- When Paul uses the word "law" in these verses, he is almost always speaking of the Torah which is the law that God gave Moses on Mount Sinai. Not any governmental rules and not the entirety of God's "natural law."
- **V.12** – This verse speaks of two different classes of sinners:
  - **Those that "sin apart from the law"** – These are the Gentiles. They will be judged on the basis of the knowledge available to them. The verse says they "will perish apart from the law." They won't be condemned for failing to conform to a code of law they knew nothing about. They will not perish because they didn't have the Jewish law; they will perish because they have sinned.
  - **Those that "sin under the law"** – These are the Jews. They will be judged by God's written law because they had been trained in it. God gave the law to the Jews specifically and they will be held accountable for sinning against it. This does not mean that they are any better or more secure though; in fact, some Gentiles may be better off at the last judgement than some Jews.
- People are not condemned for what they don't know, but for what they do with what they know.
- Those who know God's written Word and his law will be judged by them.
- Those that have never seen a Bible still know right from wrong; they will be judged guilty because they did not keep even the standard of their own conscience.
- **V. 13** – The Jews Paul was addressing in this chapter may have thought that they were righteous by simply sitting in their synagogues every Sabbath and hearing the law, but that isn't the case.
- It is those people that "obey the law that will be declared righteous."
- The Bible has always taught this from the Old to the New Testament.
  - **Leviticus 18:5** says, "<sup>5</sup>Keep my decrees and laws, for the man who obeys them will live by them. I am the LORD."
  - **James 1:22-25** says, "<sup>22</sup>Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says. <sup>23</sup>Anyone who listens to the word but does not do what it says is like a man who looks at his face in a mirror <sup>24</sup>and, after looking at himself, goes away and immediately forgets what he looks like. <sup>25</sup>But the man who looks intently into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it--he will be blessed in what he does"
- Paul is making it clear that a person that "obeys the law will be declared righteous," but what does that mean?
- Some can look at this and think that Paul was trying to offer a way to righteousness by means of works or the law.
- However, we know from the totality of Scripture that is not the case, he was merely laying out our hopelessness.
- No one can ever obey the letter of the law completely and thus no one would then be righteous, that's why we needed Jesus to be the "atoning sacrifice" for our sins.
- We are not righteous because we simply hear the law, and we can never keep the law good enough to become righteous.
- Our righteousness comes "through faith" as Paul taught us in Chapter 1.

- **V. 14-15** – Here Paul is qualifying what he has said in v.12 about the Gentiles being “apart from the law.”
- Even though the Gentiles are in fact “apart from the law,” that does not mean that they do not in some ways have access to the law and keep it. At least the God’s “law” in an extended sense.
- The knowledge of God’s character was available to these Gentiles and they knew the difference between right and wrong.
- This sense of moral awareness of the “things required by the law,” will serve in place of the law to judge them.
- V.15 speaks of, “the requirements of the law are written on their hearts.”
  - All cultures and nations, no matter how different, have a common recognition that some things are right and others are wrong. (ex. murder, stealing, lying...)
  - God is the one that have “written” these requirements of the law on all of our hearts.
- It goes on to say, “their consciences also bearing witness.”
  - The word “consciences” in this verse is the Greek word *syneidēsis* which means – “that process of thought which distinguishes what it considers morally good or bad, commending the good, condemning the bad, and so prompting to do the former, and avoid the latter. Bearing witness with God’s law.”
  - What the law does for the Jew, the conscience does for the Gentile.
- Lastly v. 15 says, “and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”
  - The Gentile’s innate knowledge of God’s law leads them often to do what is right.
  - When this happens, their consciences, along with their thoughts, “defend” them, convincing them that they are doing what God requires.
    - Some translations use the word “excuse” which is actually a good translation of the Greek word *apologeomai*.
  - However, they will not always obey, and when they do not, the conscience has the opposite effect, it “accuses” them.
  - Every person will at times do or not do what their “conscience” tells them to do. Once the action is done, you then fill “accused” or “defended/excused”.
- **V.16** – Commentators differ on whether this verse goes along with vv. 12-13 like the NIV here implies or that it flows directly from what vv. 14-15 says.
- I personally tend to go with the NIV’s flow because vv. 14-15 are qualifying statements to the larger argument Paul is making. They are a pause in his thoughts before he moves on in v. 16.
- Going with that model, “righteousness” is conferred on people at the Christ’s judgement.
- On that day, those who are deserving will be declared righteous as it says in v.13.
- The only way to truly judge a person is to judge the “secrets” of the heart, conscience, and thoughts.
- This is the manner that both Jews and Gentiles will be judged.
- God will judge “through Jesus Christ.” For those that are trusting in Christ for their righteousness, God’s judgement does not include the fear of exposure and punishment.
- **Romans 8:1** says, “Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.”
- What is important now is that we are under Christ’s atoning sacrifice and not “under the law.”
- We certainly do not want to be found “apart from Christ” on judgement day.

## Next Week Study

### Romans 2:17-29