

Romans Session 28

Principles of God's Judgment Part 2 (4)

One more time we will lay out the principles of God's judgment, just as Paul lays them out here in Romans Chapter 2

Knowledge (v-1)

Truth (v-2-3)

Guilt (v-4-5)

Deeds (V-6-10)

Impartiality (v-11-15)

Motives (v-16)

Our last time together we talked about God's impartiality, and we are not quite through with that yet.

As Paul points out then that the person who genuinely obeys God's Word proves by his divinely-empowered obedience that he is saved and hereby will be recognized as **justified** on the Day of Judgment.

Does that mean then that Gentiles are excused from eternal judgment and punishment because they have not had the advantage of **the Law** and therefore had no basis for obedient living?

No, because as Paul has already established, **the Gentiles, that is, those who do not have the Law** have God's general, or natural, revelation of Himself in creation and know instinctively that they're guilty and worthy of death;
Romans 1:18-32

Then there would be those that ask, doesn't Paul later say that *where there is no law, neither is there violation" (4:5) "until the law sin was in the world; but sin is not imputed when there is no law"(5:13), and "I would not have come to know sin except through the Law" (7:7)*

Anticipating such questions, Paul here states that **Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the law, being a law to themselves.**

And explaining further, the apostle says, *"They show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them."*

There are four reasons why the heathen are lost.

First. As already noted, their rejection of their knowledge of God available through His creation condemns them. **Second** as the apostle now points out, their conduct, based on the knowledge **of the Law Witten in their hearts,** condemns them.

Throughout history there have been many unbelievers who have been honest in business, respectful of their parents, faithful to their wives or husbands, caring of their children and generous to those who in need all of which good things God's Word commends.

God's standard of justice is reflected in many secular judicial systems, wherein stealing, murder, and various other forms of immorality are considered wrong and made illegal.

Many pagan philosophies, both ancient and modern teach certain standards of ethics that closely parallel those in Scripture.

The Bible reports many good deeds done by pagans such as Darius;

Daniel 6:25-28 (NASB)

²⁵ *Then Darius the king wrote to all the peoples, nations and men of every language who were living in all the land: "May your peace abound!*

²⁶ *"I make a decree that in all the dominion of my kingdom men are to fear and tremble before the God of Daniel; For He is the living God and enduring forever, And His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed, And His dominion will be forever.*

²⁷ *"He delivers and rescues and performs signs and wonders In heaven and on earth, Who has also delivered Daniel from the power of the lions."*

²⁸ *So this Daniel enjoyed success in the reign of Darius and in the reign of Cyrus the Persian.*

Or the city clerk in Ephesus;

Acts 19:35-41 (NASB)

³⁵ *After quieting the crowd, the town clerk *said, "Men of Ephesus, what man is there after all who does not know that the city of the Ephesians is guardian of the temple of the great Artemis and of the image which fell down from heaven?*

³⁶ *"So, since these are undeniable facts, you ought to keep calm and to do nothing rash.*

³⁷ *"For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of our goddess.*

³⁸ *"So then, if Demetrius and the craftsmen who are with him have a complaint against any man, the courts are in session and proconsuls are available; let them bring charges against one another.*

³⁹ *"But if you want anything beyond this, it shall be settled in the lawful assembly.*

⁴⁰ *"For indeed we are in danger of being accused of a riot in connection with today's events, since there is no real cause for it, and in this connection we will be unable to account for this disorderly gathering."*

⁴¹ *After saying this he dismissed the assembly.*

We also have the Roman military officers that protected Paul;

Acts 23:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ *And as a great dissension was developing, the commander was afraid Paul would be torn to pieces by them and ordered the troops to go down and take him away from them by force, and bring him into the barracks.*

Acts 23:17-35 (NASB)

¹⁷ *Paul called one of the centurions to him and said, "Lead this young man to the commander, for he has something to report to him."*

¹⁸ *So he took him and led him to the commander and *said, "Paul the prisoner called me to him and asked me to lead this young man to you since he has something to tell you."*

¹⁹ *The commander took him by the hand and stepping aside, began to inquire of him privately, "What is it that you have to report to me?"*

²⁰ *And he said, "The Jews have agreed to ask you to bring Paul down tomorrow to the Council, as though they were going to inquire somewhat more thoroughly about him.*

²¹ *"So do not listen to them, for more than forty of them are lying in wait for him who have bound themselves under a curse not to eat or drink until they slay him; and now they are ready and waiting for the promise from you."*

²² *So the commander let the young man go, instructing him, "Tell no one that you have notified me of these things."*

²³ *And he called to him two of the centurions and said, "Get two hundred soldiers ready by the third hour of the*

night to proceed to Caesarea, with seventy horsemen and two hundred spearmen."

²⁴ *They were* also to provide mounts to put Paul on and bring him safely to Felix the governor.

²⁵ And he wrote a letter having this form:

²⁶ "Claudius Lysias, to the most excellent governor Felix, greetings.

²⁷ "When this man was arrested by the Jews and was about to be slain by them, I came up to them with the troops and rescued him, having learned that he was a Roman.

²⁸ "And wanting to ascertain the charge for which they were accusing him, I brought him down to their Council;

²⁹ and I found him to be accused over questions about their Law, but under no accusation deserving death or imprisonment.

³⁰ "When I was informed that there would be a plot against the man, I sent him to you at once, also instructing his accusers to bring charges against him before you."

³¹ So the soldiers, in accordance with their orders, took Paul and brought him by night to Antipatris.

³² But the next day, leaving the horsemen to go on with him, they returned to the barracks.

³³ When these had come to Caesarea and delivered the letter to the governor, they also presented Paul to him.

³⁴ When he had read it, he asked from what province he was, and when he learned that he was from Cilicia,

³⁵ he said, "I will give you a hearing after your accusers arrive also," giving orders for him to be kept in Herod's Praetorium.

And then there were the natives of Malta;

Acts 28:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ *They also honored us with many marks of respect; and when we were setting sail, they supplied us with all we needed.*

The fact that such people did good things, knowing they were ethically good, proves that they had the knowledge of God's Law written in their hearts.

Therefore if those people never come to trust in the true God, their good deeds will actually witness against them on the Day of Judgment.

Third the heathen are condemned because of conscience.

Gentiles who do not have the privilege of knowing God's law nevertheless have a **conscience bearing witness** to His law.

The word, *Suneidesis (conscience)* literally means, "knowledge with," or "co-knowledge." With the root meaning that is found in many ancient languages. The idea that men recognize that they have an instinctive, built-in sense of right and wrong that activates guilt.

It is reported that a tribe in Africa had an unusual but effective way to test the guilt of an accused person. A group of suspects would be lined up and the tongue of each would be touched with a hot knife.

If the tongue was dry, the blade would stick and create a vicious searing burn. But if the saliva was on the tongue the blade would sizzle but cause little pain.

The tribe knew that a sense of guilt tends to make a person's mouth dry, and a seared tongue therefore was taken as proof of guilt.

The making of such a dry mouth is, of course, the work of the conscience.

Consciences vary in sensitivity, depending on the degree of one's knowledge of and feeling about right and wrong. The person who has considerable knowledge of God's Word will have a more sensitive conscience than someone who has never had opportunity to know Scripture.

But consciences also vary in sensitivity depending on whether they are obeyed or resisted.

Some years ago it was discovered that, contrary to long held medical thinking, the gross disfiguration of the extremities that is so common in lepers is not caused directly by the disease.

Leprosy does not deteriorate or eat at the flesh but rather desensitizes the nerves.

Unprotected by the warning signals of pain, the leper wears down his extremities or suffers cuts, burns, and infections without knowing he is being injured.

In much the same way, the neglected and resisted conscience becomes more insensitive and eventually may stop giving warning signals about wrongdoing.

Paul speaks of heretics and apostates in the last days whose consciences will be desensitized as if cauterized by a hot iron because of their persistent opposition to God and His truth.

1 Timothy 4:1-2 (NASB)

¹ But the Spirit explicitly says that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to deceitful spirits and doctrines of demons,

² by means of the hypocrisy of liars seared in their own conscience as with a branding iron,

God uses the consciences of His children as vehicles for his guidance. Thus it is thrust on each believer to obey his conscience with consistency so that he will not find that it is hardened and unresponsive.

Fourth the heathen are lost because of their contemplation.

"Their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them."

This natural faculty obviously is closely related to conscience.

Building on the instinctive knowledge of right and wrong that the conscience provides, even unbelievers have the obvious ability to determine that certain things are basically right or wrong.

For these profound reasons no person can stand guiltless before God's judgment.

The fact that they do not turn to God proves they do not live up to the light God has given them.

Jesus declared categorically, *"if any man is willing to do His will, he shall know the teaching, whether it is of God, or whether I speak from Myself."* (John 7:17)

Paul assured his pagan listeners in Athens that:

Acts 17:26-27 (NASB)

²⁶ He made from one man every nation of mankind to live on all the face of the earth, having determined their appointed times and the boundaries of their habitation,

²⁷ that they would seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him, though He is not far from each one of us;

The person who genuinely seeks to know and follow God is divinely assured he will succeed.

Jeremiah 29:13 (NASB)

¹³ 'You will seek Me and find Me when you search for Me with all your heart.'

There was a man that grew up in one of the most primitive tribes in Africa. He was a very ill behaved and incorrigible child, and so often when the family would have guests over, he was made to stay outside. And although he was severely punished by the tribe as well as by his mother, he persisted in acts of pointless mischief and even cruelty.

He said that he felt guilty and heartsick even while doing the mischief but could not seem to help himself. He knew something was very wrong with his life and would often go into the forest and pound his head against a tree, crying, "What is wrong with me? Why do I do such things?" and more than once he considered suicide.

One day one of his friends returned from a visit to the coast.

And among the many fascinating stories he told was that of some people who met together every Sunday to sing and talk.

When the boy asked his friend why those people met together, he was told they were singing about and praying to the God who had created the whole world.

They called their God Father and believed He heard and answered their prayers.

With that small bit of knowledge about the Lord, the boy over whom the tribe had despaired decided to pray to this God himself.

He said he had never heard anyone pray, but he decided he would just talk to this God like He was my father.

He said, I can't explain what happened but it was an exciting experience.

I wanted to know more about this God but there was no one in our village who knew anything about Him.

So for 2 years he kept praying by himself on Sundays, hoping that someday someone would come along who could tell me about Him.

While working on a government road project, he visited his cousin in the village where he had been born and discovered to his great surprise and delight that group of people met there on Sundays to sing a pray to the God he had heard about.

He was very excited and said he could hardly wait for Sunday.

That morning he sat in the back.

He listened to a man tell about God for the first time in his life.

He said, I found that God was far more wonderful than he had ever imagined.

The preacher said that God so loved the world that He sent His only Son name Jesus to take away my sins. I wondered if He knew how terrible I was. I wondered if He knew the awful things I had done back in my village.

But the preacher said no matter what I had done, God would forgive me and make my hear clean and I knew it was all true.

Now listen, because that young man had been genuinely seeking God, when he finally heard the gospel the Holy Spirit confirmed its truth to his yearning heart.

He knew that God had heard his prayers and had sent him to a place where he could hear the message of salvation.

He said, "I gave my heart to God that morning, and it was nice to know He had a Son, too. So He was a Father, just like He had been praying to"