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Sermon Notes

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## **The Basis of Judgment: The Universal Internal Knowledge of God's Law**

### **Romans 2:12-16**

#### I. Review

- A. The Gospel of God: Supernatural Power for Complete Salvation;
- B. The Wrath of God: God's Passionate Response to Evil
- C. The Central issue: Exchanging the Glory of God for an Image; Result, 21 Evils
- D. Warning Against Hypocrisy & Judgmentalism; storing up wrath for the day of wrath
- E. Last Week: Judgment Day resulting in eternal life or eternal wrath
  - God's Righteous Judgment, Principle #1: Judgment According to Deeds (vs. 6-10)
  - God's Righteous Judgment, Principle #2: Judgment Without Favoritism (vs. 11)

**vs. 11 "For God does not show favoritism."**

Main Question Paul answers, vss. 12-15: How is Judgment Day impartial if Jew have the Law and Gentiles don't?

#### II. Answer #1: Two Equally Certain Ways to Impartial Condemnation (vs. 12)

Two categories of people

- A. Category #1: "All who sin apart from the law..."
  - 1. Status: "apart from the law"
    - a. usually word means lawless, wicked, sinful

**1 John 3:4 "Sin is lawlessness."**

- b. not here... here it refers to Gentiles

**1 Corinthians 9:20-21 "To the Jews, I became like a Jew. To those under the law, I became like one under the law... To those not having the law I became like one not having the law..."**

- c. Gentiles never received the Law of Moses... direct written revelation
- 2. Behavior: sinning apart from law... they SIN
  - a. sin comes whether one has Law of Moses or not
  - b. universal problem

***Rom. 3:9 We have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin.***

***Romans 3:22-23 “There is no difference [i.e. between Jew & Gentile] for all have sinned and lack the glory of God.”***

- 3. Judgment: All will perish apart from the law
  - a. ALL... no one escapes, everyone is condemned
  - b. WILL PERISH... eternal condemnation in hell

***vs. 8 “For those who are self-seeking, who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”***

***vs. 9 “There will be trouble and distress for every human being who does evil, first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”***

Perish = eternal death apart from God in hell

***John 3:16 “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not PERISH but have eternal life.”***

- c. APART FROM LAW... God will not need the Law of Moses to condemn them

Category #1: Sinners apart from law... all will perish

B. Category #2: “All who sin under the Law...”

- 1. Status: “Under the Law...”
  - a. Jews who have received the Law of Moses
  - b. They are bound to full obedience under that written code

***Galatians 3:10 “All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written, ‘Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.’”***

***James 2:10 “For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it.”***

Jews were under the Law, and the Law promised them no salvation but rather warnings of eternal judgment:

Pilgrim’s Progress: Hill = Mt. Sinai, threatened to crush him “UNDER THE LAW”!!!!

c. It offered no advantage on Judgment Day!

***Romans 3:20 “Therefore no one will be justified by observing the law; rather through the law we become conscious of sin.”***

2. Behavior: sinning under the law

a. not one Jew fully obeyed the Law of Moses

**[Jesus to Jews] *Jn. 7:19 “Has not Moses given the law? Yet not one of you keeps the law.”***

b. every Jew that has ever lived (except Jesus) sinned under the Law

3. Judgment: All will be judged by the Law

**ALL... not one will escape WILL BE JUDGED... not saved or excused... BY THE LAW**

***John 5:45 “But do not think that I will accuse you before the Father. Your accuser is Moses on whom your hopes are set.”***

Category #2: Jews sinning under the Law of Moses will, every one of them, be judged by the Law of Moses

C. Difference: Method of Prosecution, Not Outcome of Trial

No advantage to the Jews to have the Law... no disadvantage to the Gentiles not to have it... sin exists equally in the hearts of both

No one will say on Judgment Day: “That’s not fair, God!” Fair = just and righteous judgment... what we want is MERCY!!!

**III. Answer #2: Hearing the Law Gives No Advantage on Judgment Day (vs. 13)**

A. Jewish Confidence: External Advantage

1. The Lesson on the Day of King David's Anointing

- a. Saul well-acclaimed because he stood a head taller than everyone else
- b. David despised because he was just a boy

***1 Samuel 16:7 "Man looks at the outward appearance but the Lord looks at the heart."***

- c. Jews constantly did this... looked at surface things and rejected reality

"Because we have the Temple, we'll be saved on judgment day."

***Jeremiah 7:4 "Do not trust in deceptive words and say, 'This is the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord!'"***

"Because we are children of Abraham, we'll be saved on judgment day."

***[John the Baptist] Matt. 3:9 And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.***

- 2. Consistent answer: good works from a repentant, broken heart
- 3. False claim here: hearing the Law of Moses was sufficient!

"God gave us His very words... the Law inscribed on tablets of stone with his very own finger... so we will be fine on Judgment Day!"

B. Paul's answer: not the hearers but the doers

***vs. 13 "For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight but those who obey the law who will be declared righteous."***

***James 1:22 "Do not merely listen to the word and so deceive yourselves; do what it says."***

- 1. No advantage in merely hearing the Law... week after week in the synagogue
- 2. No advantage to American Christians to hear good preaching week after week in church
- 3. Jesus' parable of the seed and the soils: same word, different soils, different harvests

***Mark 4:24 "Consider carefully what you hear..."***

Week after week, you come here to hear the word of God... but hearing the Word alone without the obedience of faith means nothing on Judgment Day!

C. Who Is Justified?

1. No one by the Law
2. Only by free grace through Christ

**Romans 3:20-25** *“Therefore no one will be declared righteous [justified] by observing the law; rather through the law we become conscious of sin. But now a righteousness apart from law has been made known, to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and lack the glory of God, and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. God presented him as a propitiation through faith in his blood.”*

D. Law-Hearing Actually INCREASES Guilt on Judgment Day

**Luke 12:47-48** *“That servant who knows his master’s will and does not [do it] will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving of punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted much, much more will be asked.”*

**James 4:17** *“The one who knows the good he ought to do and doesn’t do it sins.”*

IV. Answer #3: The Gentiles DO Have A Law: The Universally Implanted Law of God (vs. 14-15)

**vs. 14-15** *“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, 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.”*

A. Gentiles Do NOT Have “The Law”

1. Paul states it twice more here
2. What did they miss?
  - a. Mosaic articulation of universal law (central principles common to all)

The “Law within the Law”

**Matthew 23:23** *“Woe to you teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill, and cummin. But you have neglected the weightier matters of the law—justice, mercy, and faithfulness.”*

- b. Mosaic regulations for the Jews (circumcision, dietary laws, sacrificial system, etc.)

B. BUT Gentiles “do the Law BY NATURE...”

1. “By nature” ⇒ part of their internal make-up from creation... innate, internal
2. NOT from culture, training, or education
3. HOW? This is POWERFUL!! God put it there when he made every human being on the face of the earth!!!

C. “A Law Unto Themselves”

1. Common meaning: someone utterly unique OR someone who is a scofflaw... doesn’t color between the lines
2. NO: here it means someone with a Law God gave them, accountable on Judgment Day
3. They have “A Law of their own!!!”

D. Where Is This Law? “Written on their hearts”

**vs. 15 “*Since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts...*”**

1. “Requirements of the Law”: Implies same Law Jews got... without specific cultural aspects
2. Jews’ Law: written by the finger of God on tablets of stone
3. Gentiles’ Law: ALSO written by the finger of God, on tablets of the soul... “WRITTEN ON THEIR HEARTS”
4. Specifics: Only God knows the content of this
  - You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart
  - You shall love your neighbor as yourself
  - Honor your father and mother
  - Don’t steal, murder, lie, etc.

**V. Answer #4: Conscience Also Testifies to the Gentile**

A. Conscience: A Tremendous Gift of God

B. Definition:

1. Latin derivation: *con* + *science* = “to know together”, “knowledge we share with others”

2. Greek word: *sun + eidesis* = “together” + “to know” “knowledge we share with others”
3. SO... conscience is common knowledge all humans share with all other humans!!!
4. Full definition: Conscience is that faculty by which one distinguishes between the morally right and wrong, which urges one to do that which he recognizes to be right and which restrains him from doing that which he recognizes to be wrong; which passes judgment on all of his acts and which executes that judgment in the soul

C. Three functions of conscience:

1. Obligatory:
  - a. Do what you should do
  - b. Don't do what you shouldn't do
2. Judicial:
  - a. You did WELL! You did what you were supposed to do, and refused to do what you weren't supposed to do
  - b. You did BADLY! You did what you shouldn't have done
3. Executive:
  - a. FEEL HAPPY... because you did well
  - b. FEEL MISERABLE... because you did wrong

D. Biblical data

1. Here conscience sometimes accuses, sometime defends

Conscience therefore proves the internal law that God has given all of us...  
If conscience sometimes accuses, then how will it be on Judgment Day?

2. New Testament speaks frequently of conscience

- a. Non-Christians:

***Titus 1:15 “To those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and their consciences are corrupted.”***

***Hebrews 9:9 “[Religious ceremonies] were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.”***

***Hebrews 10:22 “... guilty conscience”***

- b. Salvation: blood of Christ alone can cleanse the conscience

**Hebrews 9:14** “*How much more, then, will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself unblemished to God, cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death so that we may serve the living God.*”

- c. Christian: must keep a clear conscience

**Acts 24:16** [Because of the final resurrection and Judgment Day...] “*So, I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man.*”

#### E. Limitations of Conscience

- 1. Needs proper assessment of truth... what is right & wrong

- a. separate from internal law...

**vs. 15** “*...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.*”

- b. internal law can be suppressed and twisted

- c. conscience thus becomes servant to a corrupt view of truth

Illus. A stone-age tribesman in Irian Jaya feels guilty if he doesn't worship his family idol today

- 2. Conscience can be “seared”

**1 Timothy 4:2** [Speaking of false teachers] “*... hypocritical liars whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron...*”

- a. ignore or violate conscience enough, it diminishes

- b. after a while, people can commit the most heinous acts and sleep like babies

- 3. Even for Christians, conscience is not a perfect guide

**1 Corinthians 4:4** “*My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent. It is the Lord who judges me.*”

Bottom line here in Romans: the mere existence of conscience shows the truth of a universal sense of right and wrong... and it points ahead to Judgment Day



Summary: Main Question Paul answers, vss. 12-15: How is Judgment Day impartial if Jew have the Law and Gentiles don't?

Answer #1: Two Equally Certain Ways to Judgment: sinning under or apart from law

Answer #2: Hearing the Law gives no advantage, only obeying it

Answer #3: Gentiles DO Have a Law Written in Their Hearts

Answer #4: Conscience Also Bears Witness That We Deserve Judgment

VI. Judgment Day: All Secrets Exposed (vs. 16)

***vs. 16 "This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares."***

A. The Time: "the day" ... Judgment Day

1. God has set a day for the great testing of everything

***Acts 17:31 "For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed."***

2. That Day is called "the Day of the Lord" ... or here in Romans 2, the day of God's wrath

***Romans 2:5 "the day of God's wrath when His righteous judgment will be revealed."***

B. The Judge: God through Jesus Christ

1. "God will judge..."

2. BUT He will do it "through Jesus Christ"

3. Christ Himself appointed Judge of the Human Race

***John 5:22-23 "Moreover, the Father judges no one but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son even as they honor the Father."***

***Matthew 25:31 "When the Son of Man comes, in his glory, and all the angels with him, He will sit on His throne in heavenly glory. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats."***

C. The Content of the Judgment: Human Secrets... All of Them

1. Secret actions... "things done in darkness"

***Matthew 10:26 "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known."***

***Matthew 6:4 “[God] sees what is done in secret...”***

2. Secret motives... reasons why you did things

***1 Corinthians 4:5 “[when] the Lord comes; He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of men’s hearts.”***

D. The Certainty of the Judgment:

***“as my gospel declares.”***

1. According to Paul’s gospel... THERE WILL BE A JUDGMENT DAY
2. Since it is certain, are you ready?