

96-03-15a

As we approach the study of the Word of God this evening, let's take a moment to clear our minds and prepare our hearts and seek the ministry of God the Holy Spirit as we look into the truth of God's Word. Shall we pray? Father, what a wonderful privilege it is to live in this age and in this time and have access to so much of the revelation of your plan. We thank you for the preservation of your Word and for the ministry of the Holy Spirit that enables us to perceive it and to be empowered by it.

And it is our privilege to live in such a way that Jesus Christ is reflected in our lives and His glory is manifested. We pray that as we study the letter that Paul wrote to the Romans this evening, that these things will become a part of the resources in our soul and that your plan for our lives will be fulfilled as we seek to remember and apply these things in our lives. We ask it in Jesus' name.

Amen. We have covered a chapter and a half in Romans. We've covered chapter 1 and we've made it partway through chapter 2. And I thought it would be good tonight to pause for a moment and summarize the points that Paul has made because this establishes the direction for the rest of the letter.

And we reviewed last time the principles that guided Paul in his apostolic ministry and we saw how those reflect in the letters that he writes to the churches. His mission is not only to bring the knowledge of Christ to people who have never heard, but also to take new believers in Christ and bring them to the obedience of faith. And that is the bulk of his ministry that we have preserved.

His letters are letters to churches. They are addressed to believers and we have seen that this letter is manifestly to believers in the area of Rome. We have also seen that Paul has a purpose in writing this specific letter.

And as we resume our study this evening and go forward in pursuing that, we want to remind ourselves of the practical implications of what we have seen. First of all, in chapter 1, one of the main points, if you just browse through chapter 1 and read it or skim it, the thing that impresses us is that God has revealed Himself. That's the launching point from which Paul goes forward in this letter.

God has revealed Himself. And that revelation creates a responsibility. God has revealed Himself through the things that have been made, the things that God has done.

The verb there is poieo, which means to make or to do. And this shows up in chapter 1, verse 20. Since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made or the things that have been done.

God's acts in human history. This primarily focuses on creation. It reflects God's character.

And it says that because these things have been revealed, they are without excuse, these who suppress the truth. And this concept is universal. Whenever God reveals Himself, whenever the truth of God is made the issue, it creates a responsibility on the part of the hearer to respond.

Fundamentally, as unbelievers, our responsibility is to respond to God's self-revelation, to respond to the manifestation of God's grace in a positive way and to seek God. This has been true throughout history. God has revealed Himself in every age.

And people from Adam all the way to the end of history have the same responsibility to respond by seeking God, by searching out further information to come to know how to please God, and in this age specifically, the knowledge of Jesus Christ. We tend to read Romans 1.20, and we understand that God has revealed Himself in the hearts of men, that He's revealed Himself in creation. But when we think about that term creation, we realize that we are a part of that creation.

In fact, I think we had a question last time when we emphasized the fact that God has revealed Himself and the issue of response is between God and people. That sometimes calls into question our traditional view of evangelism because we are often taught that, well, we've got to go put the gospel out there. We've got to make Jesus Christ the issue in front of people so that they will face the option of salvation and make a choice, and that we are actively involved in that process.

And we sometimes emphasize evangelism to the point that we forget that evangelism is primarily God's providence. God reveals Himself, and He's far better at communicating His presence and the standard of His righteousness than we are when we go out and try to do it verbally. However, that isn't to say that we don't have a place.

So to help balance our understanding of where we fit in in terms of God's facing of unbelievers with the issue of His existence and evangelism, I thought we would stop and examine how we fit into Romans 1.20. It says that since the creation of the world, His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, the things that are created. When we think of creation, we tend to think of the physical universe, and there are tremendous manifestations of design. The old illustration goes that an astronaut gets into a spacecraft and flies through space and lands on the planet Mars, and he walks through this forbidden desert-looking red terrain, and he glances down at a shiny object at his feet, and he picks it up, and it's a wristwatch, and it says Seiko across the face.

And he looks at it and he says, what incredible processes must have gone on on this planet that this evolved. You know, it becomes ludicrous to see such precise design. When there's design, it implies a designer.

And you don't put, even if you manufacture the parts of a watch, you can't just put them in a dryer

and run it long enough until they fall together and make a watch. When there's design, when there's sophisticated, incredibly complex, and yet elegant results, when people who study the human body, and you see the interaction of chemicals and enzymes and hormones and the way the blood nourishes the tissues, and there are thousands of manifestations, it's impossible not to realize that this didn't just happen. And so that's something we have a pretty good grip on.

We can see how God has revealed himself in creation. But we also fit into that creation. And we might take a look over at Ephesians chapter 2, because we tend to think that our part in evangelism is active verbal communication, and that certainly is a part of it.

But in Ephesians chapter 2, verse 10, Paul says, We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them. We are a part of that creation as new creatures in Christ. And one of the ways that God reveals himself in creation is in his new creation.

And God does manifest his eternal power and deity in our lives after salvation. The same power that created the universe creates change in our lives and in our hearts. And we can live in such a way that people see Christ in us.

And the number of times that we are referred to as a creation of God is a reminder of that fact. Why has God created things? To reveal himself. God reveals himself in creation.

We as new creatures in Christ are a new creation. And God reveals himself there. Notice the actions of God versus the actions of believers in Ephesians 2.10. We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus.

That's an act of God. And these good works, God prepared beforehand. It's God that creates.

It's God that prepares. God initiates and we respond. And these things don't reflect our glory.

They reflect God's glory. Even the good works, even when we are obedient and live the life of faith, it reflects God's glory. We find this same concept echoed just a page or two over in Ephesians 4, beginning at verse 22.

Paul is saying, if you have heard of Christ and have been taught by him as the truth is in Jesus, that you put off concerning your former conduct the old man which grows corrupt according to deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God in true righteousness and holiness. After we have been created again, we have become new creatures in Christ, we have the opportunity to put on that newly created nature, to manifest it. Not all of us do that.

It's a choice. We are all new creatures in Christ, positionally. But in our experience and in our lives, it's a choice.

I would submit to you that one of the greatest tools in evangelism, if we really do want to communicate Christ to a lost and dying world, it is to concentrate on putting on the new creation, because that's where God reveals himself. It's not in our talents. It isn't in our eloquence in communicating the gospel.

It's in letting the work of God show through in our lives, being a place where God can create and shine forth that new nature. Paul has a lot to say about this. He mentions a very similar concept to what we see in Ephesians 4, in Colossians 3, verses 9 and 10.

Colossians 3, 9, Do not lie to one another since you have put off the old man with his deeds and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of him who created him. So now we see the means of putting on that new nature, the means of showing forth that new creation in which God reveals himself. We put on the new man by being renewed in knowledge according to the image of him who created him.

And when we put that new nature on, as it says in verse 11, there is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave or free, but Christ is all and in all. Jesus Christ is manifested. Jesus Christ is communicated in the new nature that we have the option of putting on and manifesting.

And through that creation, God manifests himself and faces unbelievers with the issue of his eternal power and deity. And it's a wonderful thing. It helps us understand why a wife can win her husband to Christ without a word, as Paul talks about when he says that if an unbelieving spouse is willing to stay, that without any verbal communication at all, an unbeliever can be won to the Lord.

Because this simple presence of the new creation in her spirit communicates Christ. And it's a wonderful thing to not get in God's way when he's communicating himself. He's much more eloquent than we are.

Second Corinthians 5, 17 is a verse that many of us have memorized. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. He is a new creation.

Old things are passed away. Behold, all things are become new. And, of course, being in Christ is a concept that we've studied in the past.

There is a positional sense in which we are in Christ. And there is an experiential sense in which we are in Christ and in which Christ is in us. Christ in you, the hope of glory, is one of the objectives that Paul has for his apostolic ministry.

That he labors, goes through labor pains again until Christ is formed in believers to whom he's writing. Galatians 6, 15 talks about the fact that it isn't circumcision or uncircumcision, but a new creation. People in the region of Galatia were making an issue about spirituality.

How can you please God? How can you be a good Christian? How can you have a healthy spiritual life? And a lot of people had decided that it was through works. It was by going back to the law. Be circumcised.

Enter into the Jewish system of religion. This is how you can manifest good works. And Paul says it's not circumcision or uncircumcision.

If you want to be spiritual, if you want to communicate Christ, it's a new creation. That's what makes the difference. James 1, 18 is our final passage on this topic.

James says in James 1, 18, talking about God, of His own will He brought us forth by the word of truth, that we might be a kind of first fruits of His creatures. First fruits of His creation. So if it is true that men in the world are without excuse because God reveals Himself in creation, we can play an active part in that process by seeking to put on the new man.

By seeking to manifest that new creation that is brought forth by the word of truth. And that, of course, is the endeavor we're engaged in tonight. So, again, in Romans 1, the prominent point that Paul makes is God has revealed Himself and that creates responsibility.

It creates responsibility in unbelievers. It also creates responsibility in believers. Not only has God revealed His eternal power and deity, but Jesus Christ has been revealed.

And this is emphasized in the very first part of the chapter when Paul says that the gospel of God was promised beforehand through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures. The specific way in which God would deliver mankind was foreshadowed and foretold in the Old Testament. And it concerned His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord, born of the seed of David according to the flesh.

This was His qualification. This was the way to help identify Him. The wise men came and were seeking, where is He that is born King of the Jews? They knew the Old Testament Scriptures.

And notice that Jesus Christ was revealed to be the Son of God in chapter 1, verse 4. He was declared, He was marked out to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness by His resurrection from the dead. In the same way that God manifests Himself in creation, Jesus Christ was manifested to be God's Son through the resurrection. The resurrection of Jesus Christ is a part of the revelation of the truth of God.

It identifies Jesus Christ and marks Him out as that name given among men under heaven whereby we are saved. And so God the Holy Spirit works these pieces of truth together in the hearts of all men. He convinces the world of sin, righteousness, and judgment.

And that creates responsibility. Without that revelation, there isn't responsibility. It was the revelation of God's command regarding the tree of good and evil that created a responsibility for Adam and Eve to not partake.

Paul is going to talk later on in Romans about the fact that where there is no law, sin is not imputed. And why is that? It doesn't mean that sin hasn't been committed, but the responsibility for that sin is not assigned because the revelation of the truth hasn't been given. And so there is a principle there that revelation of truth creates responsibility.

And Paul teaches us this and illustrates it in the world of unbelievers in chapter 1. And we can see it very clearly. We can be objective about the unbelievers. And we see what a heinous criminal act it is for people to take that truth that God reveals and to reject it and to trade it in for something else.

But now in chapter 2, Paul is going to turn that principle toward us and remind us that the truth has been revealed to us as well. And we have a similar responsibility to respond in faith to the truth that we receive after salvation just as we did to the truth of the gospel of salvation from the lake of fire. So we have the argument that begins in Romans chapter 2, Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge.

For in whatever you judge another, you condemn yourself. For you who judge practice the same things. And we talked last time about what these same things are.

It isn't so much the specific actions of deceit and murder and the heinous things that we see in the unbelieving world. It's the trading in of the truth. It's the rejection of the truth that results in those kinds of things.

But the act that we commit, if we judge, what are we doing? We are looking at other people and attempting to justify ourselves. We're attempting to say, well, because that's the motivation for judging. We don't just have an impartial objective interest in seeing that righteousness is done.

When we judge, when we look at others and seek to inflict a penalty on them and make them pay for the things that they're doing that are wrong, we have a selfish interest at heart. We want to elevate ourselves by tearing others down. Anytime we stray from the truth of God, we center on ourselves.

There are two attitudes we can have. We can either be God-centered or self-centered. And if we're not God-centered, we will be self-centered.

And the first thing that happens is we set up a standard to measure others and punish others by, whether it's just by damaging their reputation, by diminishing them in the eyes of others, by inflicting some sort of, what is it that the Amish do when they ostracize someone? They don't speak to them. There's a name for that. I can't remember what it is.

They shun them. They shun them. They just refuse to have anything to do with them, act as though they're not there.

They become invisible people. Jewish families do this sometimes when a son or daughter

converts to Christ. They have a funeral and treat them as though they're not alive anymore.

They judge them. They inflict a penalty on them. They decide, based on their own standard of righteousness, which isn't God's standard, that this person has strayed, and they punish them.

And in doing that, it's a rejection of the truth of God's self-revelation. God's self-revelation creates a responsibility to focus on Him and respond to Him, not to focus on people and respond to them. And so as soon as we get into judging, we are rejecting the truth of God.

We're doing the very same thing that unbelievers do in failing to exercise that responsibility. And Paul points this out as he goes on through chapter 2. He says in verse 2, We know that the judgment of God is according to truth against those who practice such things. And do you think, O man, you who judge those practicing such things and doing the same, that you will escape the judgment of God? All of these words for judge are forms of the Greek word krino, K-R-I-N-O.

And this is the judicial term for evaluating someone against the standard of law, deciding that they are guilty and passing sentence. That's what God is going to do. The judgment of God isn't going to simply be a perception.

The judgment of God is going to be an analysis, a conviction, and a passing of sentence. And in verse 3, the judgment of God is the very same thing that these people are doing when they judge others. He says in verse 4, Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? God's forbearance in bearing with us when we reject the truth, when we get busy looking at people and being subjective with our eyes on ourselves, our eyes on circumstances, our eyes on people, God bears with us because His desire is that we change our mind.

And His goodness and His longsuffering and forbearance are designed to lead us to repentance. But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart, you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Now, this is where the interpretation of Romans begins to diverge and take different paths.

What we might call a classic conservative understanding, a Reformed theology understanding of Romans chapter 2, is that unbelievers are still being addressed here. Because when it talks about the judgment of God, the wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God in verse 5, a lot of us as believers are hesitant to see God dealing with His own people there. The Bible tells us elsewhere that we are delivered from wrath, that because we're in Christ, we are delivered from the wrath to come and so forth.

And because Christ was judged, there won't be any judgment of believers and so forth. And so it's natural and you can't necessarily fault someone for being hesitant to see believers in this passage. But as we continue, we see that this can't be talking about believers.

In the first place, we've noted this shift to the second person here that says you, and we know who this letter is addressed to, and it's believers. But secondly, as we go through verses 6, 7, and 8, this is a judgment that is rendered based on deeds. And we know that there are two judgments that are based on deeds, if we think about our categories of judgment.

We know that the judgment seat of Christ is based on deeds. We also know that the great white throne judgment, when the dead are raised in Revelation chapter 20, they are judged according to their works, which equates to deeds. So we have to choose between one or the other of those judgments.

At this judgment that's spoken of in Romans 2, God will render to each according to his deeds, eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good, seek for glory, honor, and immortality. Well, that eliminates one of the two deeds judgments, because at the great white throne, the reason people haven't been resurrected prior to that time is they're not believers. All of the unbelievers up to the time of Christ are resurrected when he returns and begins the millennial kingdom.

All of the Old Testament saints, from Adam through John the Baptist, and any of those that died up until the day of Pentecost, are Old Testament saints and they are raised incorruptible to receive the fulfillment of the promises that's talked about in Hebrews chapter 11. They are raised at the beginning of the millennial kingdom and they have their resurrection bodies and they live from that point forward. The rest of the dead, Revelation tells us, live not until the thousand years are completed.

Church age believers, people from the day of Pentecost forward, who die in Christ and the rapture generation, are a part of the bride of Christ that is raised at the rapture. The dead in Christ rise first. We who are alive and remain are caught up together with them and so shall we ever be with the Lord.

Tribulational saints, the seven year period after we leave, are back under the Old Testament economy. They are raised if they are martyred during the tribulation. They are raised when Christ returns at the beginning of the millennial kingdom.

So all believers of every age are raised by the time the millennial kingdom starts. And so the great white throne judgment only has to do with unbelievers, the rest of the dead that live not. They are judged according to their works and all of them are cast into the lake of fire because no one's works measure up to the standard of God's righteousness.

Without Christ, without faith, it is impossible to please God. So this judgment here results in eternal life being granted to those who by patient continuance in doing good, seek for glory, honor, and immortality. So this is in fact a reference to the judgment seat of Christ.

This letter is addressed to church age believers and this righteous judgment of God in verse 5 is

the judgment seat of Christ. That is a deeds judgment. But now we are awakened to a new possibility because at this judgment it says that there are people who are treasuring up for themselves wrath in the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God.

So we have connected with this deeds judgment, which is the judgment seat of Christ, the possibility of experiencing God's wrath. That's a very uncomfortable thought. But again, it's the only conclusion we can draw.

This letter is addressed to believers. This is not a judgment based on whether or not Christ has been accepted, whether or not someone is in Christ. This is a judgment based on deeds.

And God will be angry if the deeds don't measure up. We know that there are reprobate believers. We know that there are people who accept Christ and then completely ignore anything that has to do with God's plan of grace.

Even many of us who tend to be religious fall into legalism and seek to establish our righteousness by works that are done in our own strength rather than the obedience that comes from faith. And so this gives us pause for thought. God will render to each according to his deeds eternal life.

Now we say, well, wait a minute. I thought believers already had eternal life. We will see as we go forward in Romans, we'll get a chance to concentrate on this phrase eternal life, see how it is used in other passages, and I will tell you in advance the conclusion that we draw is that this eternal life is not simply the continued existence with God in the eternal future.

This is the abundant life. This is the inheritance. This is the full enjoyment of those blessings and rewards and the privilege of reflecting the glory of Jesus Christ throughout the eternal future.

And it will be experienced in varying degrees. There are those who are more patient and continue more faithfully in the seeking for glory and honor in immortality. It's not simply that we all do to the maximum or we don't to the maximum.

There are degrees. And this is why Paul tells the Corinthians that as star differs from star in glory, so shall it be in the resurrection. Some of us are going to frankly be dim bulbs in the millennial kingdom because we were dim bulbs in this life.

We didn't exercise patience. We didn't continue in the pursuit of the reflection of Christ's glory. But in verse 8 it says, to those who are after those who have been patient and seek that glory, honor, and immortality, those receive eternal life.

And in verse 8, those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth. And keep in mind this is parallel to what we've just seen. He's saying there's a contrast between those who judge and those who don't.

Those who don't judge are the ones who are continuing to do good. They're seeking for glory, honor, and immortality. Those who judge fall into this verse 8 category.

And notice the parallel. It is self-seeking and not obeying the truth to judge. That's the parallel.

You are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge. Because, verse 8 says, you are self-seeking and you do not obey the truth, but you obey unrighteousness. And the reward for judging, the reward for disregarding the truth, which is our parallel to chapter 1, is indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek.

Now why does it say the Jew first and also the Greek? Wasn't this the issue in the early church? Who were the first believers? Who was there on the day of Pentecost? They were all Jews. The first generation of the church was all Jewish. Paul says in another place that the Jews were the first fruits in Christ.

And he says we were the first to hope in Christ. I believe that's in Ephesians chapter 1. He says those of us who were first to hope in Christ. And then it broadened to include the Gentiles.

And Paul is the last of the apostles to be called, ministers to the last of the nations to be called, which are the Gentiles. And so this Jew first and also the Greek is a reference to the church, to believers in this age. So there will be tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek.

It isn't enough that you're Jewish. There was a big perception, sort of almost a reverse. Instead of anti-Semitism, it was pro-Semitism, that if you were a Jewish believer, you were on a slightly higher plane than a Gentile believer because you had come straight from the people of God.

And the Gentiles were sort of coming in second and afterward and were somehow not quite as pleasing in God's sight perhaps. And so Paul sort of uses this against them. And he says, those of you that are wrestling with this problem of the law and of converting to Judaism and circumcision and all of that, just remember that if you're sitting there judging and disregarding the truth that God has revealed, the Jews of the church age will be the first to receive indignation and wrath.

They were the first to receive the truth and they'll be the first to receive the judgment. I suspect that the judgment seat of Christ will probably proceed, based on this passage, in chronological order. And the first to hope in Christ and the first to fail in Christ will be the first to be rewarded or to be judged in Christ.

So there will be indignation, wrath, tribulation and anguish on every soul of man who does evil. And notice again, this is based on deeds. Who does evil.

It doesn't say who lacks Christ, who has rejected Christ, who has trodden underfoot the Son of God or whatever. This says doing evil. This is practice.

This is lifestyle. These are priorities and choices in the life of believers, of the Jew first and also the Greek. But glory, honor and peace.

And this again is a synonym for that eternal life in verse 7. What are we talking about when we say eternal life? Verse 10 tells us glory, honor and peace. Does it mean that we can get to eternal life and eternal existence with God and not have these things? I suspect that all of us will experience these things to some degree. But by comparison, if we completely fritter away this life, completely disregard the truth of God, there's going to be a day of reckoning.

God does not pass over the human good and the evil that we engage in. There's been some wonderful study done in the past on the fact that sin was judged at the cross, but human good and evil will be judged at the judgment seat of Christ because we are still responsible for those things. And it concludes here in verse 11, there is no partiality with God.

And he's going to go on and expand on this when he says, as many as have sinned outside the law or without the law will perish outside the law and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law. For it is not the hearers of the law that are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. For when the Gentiles who don't have the law by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves.

They show the work of the law written in their hearts. Their conscience bears witness. And in themselves or between themselves, their thoughts either accuse or excuse them.

What is this saying? In the early days of the church, the scriptures that were available to be studied and be learned from were still the Old Testament scriptures. It was still the law of Moses. And the early church did not necessarily throw over the law.

Most of the Jewish Christians continued to observe the feasts and continued to worship through some of the forms that the law offered them, especially while the temple was still standing. But they did it with a new understanding and with a new appreciation for what those things represented and for their fulfillment in Jesus Christ. There's a very interesting study that can be done if you follow the career of Paul in Acts and notice when he arrives at a place and when he leaves at a place.

And many times Luke will note that after the feast was finished, they traveled. Why was that? Paul didn't travel on feast days. Paul was a Christian.

The law is passe. And yet we see that Paul still honored those feasts. But I'm sure that he used those as opportunities to teach the fulfillment and the church-age truth, the revelation of the mystery that had been foreshadowed in those feasts and in those forms of the law.

And there's nothing wrong with the law. Sometimes because we recognize that it's not the means of sanctification, simply by keeping it in an external way, we tend to have a negative association with the law. The law is just and right and holy.

It came from God. It's a revelation of God. And Jewish Christians could worship through the law, in their understanding of the law, as long as they didn't substitute the law for righteousness by faith.

And that was the great error, was falling away from faith and falling into righteousness by works in the energy of the flesh and seeing these things as external forms instead of things that could be done out of a heart that is characterized by faith. And so when Paul talks about this and he says, sure, these first few generations of the church who are Jewish and have the law, they understand God's requirement. It's great to not only have the righteousness of God imputed in our soul and not only begin to have that new man created in us, but to have the Scriptures, to already know the Scriptures, to have been trained up in them and to see how God's righteousness is reflected in the law.

And so people that were trained up in the law, like Paul, what a great apostle he was to the Gentiles because he was thoroughly schooled in the Old Testament and he quotes it constantly as he communicates. But it was the means to faith. It wasn't a means to righteousness.

And Paul is careful to never, in his teaching and in the majority of his example, to never bypass the fact that these things are to be the object of faith and obedience is the fruit of faith. And so he says, those who are outside the law and disregard the revelation of God, they're going to perish outside the law. It isn't the righteous penalty of the law that's going to come on them because they're not under the law.

And so it would be like trying to... It's sometimes confusing because we have crimes that are committed against Americans overseas and we think, well, that person ought to be brought to trial. We ought to bring him to this country, this Panamanian drug lord that massacred some American citizen. We ought to bring him over here and try him and sentence him and put him in prison.

But the thing is, he doesn't live in America. He's not under our laws. It's very difficult to apply American law to a foreigner that lives in a foreign country.

Well, Gentiles were never under the law. And so the penalty of death for their disregard of the law doesn't apply. But they're responsible for the revelation that God has given them and the penalty is known to them.

Sin and righteousness and judgment are revealed by the Holy Spirit to everyone. And so if they're outside the law, they will perish outside the law, it says in verse 12. And as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law.

The law itself communicates the penalty. These people who take pride in knowing the law, well, by the law comes the knowledge of sin. And if you know the law and you don't acknowledge sin and turn from it, then the penalty of the law will come on you.

It's not the hearers of the law that are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law that will be justified. Now, this is critical because chapter 2, verse 13 talks about the type of judgment that's being made here. Who is it that is righteous or just in the sight of God? This isn't talking about salvation.

This isn't talking about... You know, there's never actually a judgment where the believers and the unbelievers all stand together and are weeded out in the church age, at the beginning of the millennium or at the Great White Throne. There's only one judgment where believers and unbelievers stand side by side and are separated out. And that's the judgment at the end of the millennial kingdom.

We'll see that tonight. But this is justification in the sight of God at the judgment seat of Christ. This is not salvation justification as we think of it.

Justification is the imputation of righteousness at the point of faith in Christ. Sanctification is what is in view here. What kind of life are we leading? What kind of deeds are we performing? Because notice it says, it is the doers who will be justified.

And this again is a judgment based on deeds. It's not based on the accepting or rejecting of Christ. This is accepting or rejecting the truth after salvation.

And he goes on and explains this in verses 14 and 15. Gentiles who don't have the law by nature do the things in the law. Even though they don't have the law, they are a law to themselves.

Why is that? Because the truth that God reveals creates responsibility and they respond to that in a positive way and they seek out the truth and they have a desire to please God. What does it say in Hebrews chapter 11? Without faith it is impossible to please God. He that comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him.

We've had that concept of seeking already in this chapter. They show the work of the law written in their hearts. Their conscience is what bears witness.

And inside themselves their thoughts either accuse or excuse them. They've got a law. They've got a standard of truth inside them that convicts.

God the Holy Spirit uses the truth of the Word of God to convict of sin. Jesus said that that would be the Holy Spirit's ministry. Verse 16 he says, In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, this is the judgment seat of Christ according to my gospel.

And notice the judgment seat of Christ is a part of Paul's gospel. And we've emphasized that

point in the past. So even having understood what Paul is saying here in chapter 2, it would be nice to have some confirmation from elsewhere in Scripture that our understanding of what Paul is saying is correct.

So we're going to take our break. And when we return we're going to see the other places in Scripture where this same principle is taught. And I think by the time we finish we'll be comfortable.

It always, at least for me, it makes me a little bit nervous to step way outside the traditional understanding of passages. But the Word of God forces us to it. You run into so many contradictions and problems trying to take this any other way.

You have salvation by works. You have a judgment that you can't find anywhere else in Scripture. And so we're forced to do our best to be faithful to what Scripture itself says.

So when we come back from our break we're going to see the other things that Scripture has to say about this day of judgment for believers in Christ.