

Title: Every Man is Without Excuse

Scripture: Romans 2:12-16

Series: God's Saving Grace

1. Introduction:

- a. Our last sermon explored the truth that Jews and Gentiles, both sinners and the self-righteous, are born sinners and in need of salvation.
- b. We spent much time talking about the problem of self-justification. Self-justification is one of the greatest sins anyone can commit because it denies our most fundamental need: salvation through Jesus Christ.
- c. In our passage today we see the perfection of God's judgment as He teaches us that He will judge everyone without partiality. Therefore, every man is without excuse before our Holy God.

2. Verse 12: With or Without the Law, Every Man is a sinner:

For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.

- a. Verse 12 stresses that whether a person has access to God's Word or not, he will be judged without partiality. Paul makes the case that because no man can be justified by their deeds or conscience, every man stands condemned.
 - i. In other words, the reality is that both the self-righteous and the wicked have no ground to boast. All men are born sinners and separated from God.

b. The Law that Paul references here is the law of Moses, specifically, the ten commandments (Moral Law). In making a division between those who sin “without the law” and those who sin “in the law,” Paul is speaking about the distinction between Gentiles and Jews.

i. Regarding the Gentiles, Paul says that **all who have sinned without the law**. The Gentiles lived **without the Law of God**. They had no instruction into the divine commandments.

1. **Ephesians 2:12** remember that you were at that time separated from Christ, alienated from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world.

2. Therefore, their sin was **without the law** or the specific knowledge of God’s holy commands.

3. Yet they are still held responsible for their sin. Our passage says that this group **will also perish without the Law**. In other words, the gentile's ignorance of the Law of God does not excuse their actions. We will see they know when they are sinning and continue doing so. They will still be judged and perish.

ii. In contrast, Jews lived within the boundaries defined by the law. From the Jewish point of view, this difference caused by the possession of God’s law was crucial. They believed that they themselves were virtually assured of salvation

because they lived with the influence of God's Law. And yet, Paul accuses them of breaking the very Law that they possessed. He states that **all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law.**

1. So instead of being assured salvation because they possessed the Law, the self-righteous will be judged by the very Law they have broken.

c. This verse confirms and explains the reason for the Jews' condemnation; its purpose is not to show how people can be justified but to set forth the standard that must be met if a person is to be justified. Jews believed that "doing" the law, or perhaps the intent to do the law, would lead, for the Jew already in covenant relationship with God, to final salvation. Paul affirms the principle that doing the law can lead to salvation, but:

- i. He denies that anyone can keep the law of God; and
- ii. He denies that Jews can depend on their privileged relationship to shield them from the consequences of failure to keep the Law.

d. We see here the fairness and perfection of God's judgment. God will judge according to the knowledge that the individual has.

3. Verse 13: Possessing knowledge is not enough; the Law requires perfect obedience: For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

- a. Paul now turns his attention to the Jews and explains why even those possessing the law will be condemned on the day of judgment. It is because the law can justify only when it is perfectly obeyed. Reading the Law, hearing it taught and preached, studying it, or almost perfectly obeying it cannot justify a sinner before an absolutely holy God. No one can be declared judicially innocent before the Great Judge by their own merits, works, or religiosity. No one can keep the law of God.
- i. **Romans 3:20** For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.
- b. Beloved, *if* it were possible to be justified by our own good works, only those who are perfect “doers of the law” would be declared righteous on judgment day. But as we look through the halls of time, we cannot find one man, except for Jesus, who could honestly say that they have kept the Law and the spirit of the Law.
- i. **Psalms 53:1-3** The fool says in his heart, “There is no God.” They are corrupt, doing abominable iniquity; there is none who does good. (2) God looks down from heaven on the children of man to see if there are any who understand, who seek after God. (3) They have all fallen away; together they have become corrupt; there is none who does good, not even one.
 - ii. **Romans 3:10-12** as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; (11) no one understands; no one seeks for God. (12) All have turned

aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.”

- c. We know that no human can perfectly keep the Law without ever breaking any part. And we know that by breaking just one command, the sinner becomes guilty of breaking the entire law.
 - i. **James 2:10** For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.
4. Verse 14: Gentiles, a Law unto themselves: For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law.
- a. This portion answers that age-old question; What about the person who has never heard the Gospel? How is it fair that God will judge that person?
 - b. Paul explains how perfectly God applies His judgment. Some have lived without the law, yet they certainly have some knowledge of God’s moral demands. And when God condemns them, he does not do so without their having any understanding of his demands upon them.
 - i. Paul argues that all human beings possess an “**unwritten**” or “**natural**” law—an innate moral sense of “**right and wrong**.”
 - ii. Paul then asserts that, at times, Gentiles “**do the things of the law**” through a natural, inborn sense.
 - 1. Paul’s point is that Gentiles who are outside of Christ regularly obey their parents and

refrain from murder, robbery, or other wicked sins.

iii. Paul goes on to claim that those who do these things reveal the existence of that law and are “**a law to themselves.**”

1. These Gentiles, while not possessing the law of Moses, nevertheless have access to knowledge of God’s will for them.

iv. So when an unbeliever sins against what he knows is right, he still sins against the God he does not know.

5. Verse 15: The Law on the heart: They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them

a. In this verse, the Bible speaks about unbelievers born without any advantage regarding the scriptures.

b. Paul says that the law is **written on their hearts**. They know the moral standard of God.

c. With great fairness, God judges those lacking His Word by how well they live according to the sense of right and wrong in their hearts.

i. Therefore, the unbeliever’s conscience stands as a witness against each individual because each person knows what is wrong in the confines of their heart.

ii. Beloved, no unrepentant sinner can escape judgment. Every person (wicked sinner or self-justified heathen) falls short. No one measures up to even their own moral perceptions

of right or wrong, and no one can measure up to the Moral Law of God.

- iii. Knowledge of God's moral demands among the Gentiles simply demonstrates their guilt.
- iv. On the day of judgment, all those that have died apart from Christ, will not be able to rise before God and declare that God has been unfair.
- v. Martin Luther put it this way; all men have the knowledge concerning the works that must be done, but not the grace to fulfill the Law written on their hearts.

d. The **excusing and accusing testimony of the thoughts within each person's conscience** foreshadows the verdict of God, who will bring every thought to light.

6. Verse 16: God judges both deeds and thoughts: on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

a. Verse 16 is of great importance. It sets the criteria for the day of judgment. On that last day, God will judge both wicked and self-justified sinners by only one standard. God's judgment will be according to the Gospel. In other words, God will find every unrepentant unbeliever guilty of neglecting the glorious Gospel of salvation.

i. They will be guilty of rejecting the Son and His free offer of Grace.

b. Because they never received God's forgiveness through Christ, they will be judged instead by their conscience and thoughts. Beloved, in the judgment of

God, even the secret thoughts will be used as evidence.

c. That God's judgment will take into account outward actions and the "hidden things" is recorded in Scripture.

i. **Jeremiah 17:9-10** The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately sick; who can understand it? (10) "I the LORD search the heart and test the mind, to give every man according to his ways, according to the fruit of his deeds."

d. So what thoughts will God judge:

i. Selfish thoughts

1. **Philippians 2:3** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.

ii. Proud thoughts

1. **Proverbs 11:2** When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with the humble is wisdom.

iii. Angry thoughts

1. **Psalms 37:8** Refrain from anger, and forsake wrath! Fret not yourself; it tends only to evil.

iv. Impure thoughts

1. **Matthew 5:27-28** "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' (28) But I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lustful intent has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

- v. Worldly thoughts
 - 1. **Colossians 3:2** Set your minds on things that are above, not on things that are on earth.
- e. It is so important that if you are here today never having come to Christ as Savior, you abandon all thoughts of self-justification and come to the Savior before it is too late.
 - i. **Preaching the Word Commentary**: All unbelievers must realize that if they do not have the righteousness of Christ through faith, their sins are yet upon them, and God will judge them with perfect judgment. Handy Moralizations - Everybody's doing it. To err is human; to forgive is divine. Nobody's perfect - will not suffice. In verse 16, Paul refers to the coming day of judgment; therefore, men and women need to settle out of court while they can.
 - 1. **John 8:24** I told you that you would die in your sins, for unless you believe that I am he you will die in your sins.”
 - 2. However, we also read in **John 1:12** But to all who did receive him, who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God,
 - 3. Peter wrote in **1 Peter 2:24** He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.

7. Benediction:

- a. **Romans 3:23** for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

Public Reading of Scripture
Romans 3:23-28