

Rom.2:12-16 (WCF 19:1-2) "Written on the Heart"

For the Children: When the Bible says that certain things are written on the hearts of all people, it doesn't mean that there are actual words written visibly on our hearts as if a doctor could look at your heart and see letters there. It means that deep-down, everyone knows something of what God says is right and wrong. God has made us that way. Some people have also learned much more about God's law by reading the Bible. But none of us keep His Law the way we should. We all need the Lord Jesus to save us from our sins. **Questions:** What are the 3 truths taught here about how God uses His Law to judge people? Why do Christians also need the Lord Jesus as our Saviour? Is it fair for God to punish people who have never read the Bible?

Introduction:

First Point: Some General Principles of Judgement

- 1) Sinners Judged by the Law: All who have sinned will be judged by the standard of God's law. They will all perish (apart from Christ), for all have sinned (Rom.3:9,10,19,20).
- 2) Only Doers of the Law Will Be Justified: Only those who do the Law perfectly could be justified by their own works. But no one in this fallen world does so. Even those who know the Law, fail to act perfectly on what they know.
- 3) The Law Therefore Shows Our Need of Christ: The apostle is leading up to the conclusion of 3:21f – that the only way anyone can be saved is by faith in Christ, receiving His righteousness imputed as a free gift of grace – not by our own poor works.

Second Point: Judgement of the Jews

- 1) Sinning Under the Law: The Jews, who had received God's Law, nevertheless sinned "under the Law." They would be judged by that law and found wanting. They had no excuses – more is required of those given more (Luke.12:47-48). They needed Christ as much as anyone else.
- 2) A Parallel with Christians: We know God's law, as well as His promises, in some ways even better – for we have the completed Word. We have been given much indeed. We have even less excuse for breaking God's laws. It is vitally important that we look to Christ for our salvation.

Third Point: Judgement of the Gentiles

- 1) Sinning without the Law: Gentiles who sin without having received the Law, as laid down in God's Word, will perish apart from the Law. Is this fair? Yes, because they have that Law written on their hearts – as demonstrated by the way their conscience condemns or defends them (vss. 14-16).
- 2) How This Came About: WCF 19:1 explains that before the Fall God gave Adam the Law in its seed-form, also promises of blessing and warnings of punishment, depending on his works. He did not yet need Christ's work to cover his sins. This arrangement is called the "covenant of works." Before the Fall, man had the ability to keep this covenant perfectly; after he sinned, he lost that ability and needed a "covenant of grace." Adam also had the Law written on his heart. This remained the case for all his descendants, even after the Fall.
- 3) The Present Situation: The Law didn't change after the Fall. God didn't "lower the bar" – requiring only faith, not perfect obedience any longer, as per Classical Arminianism. But Gentiles break the Law written on their hearts and Jews break the Law both written on their hearts and which they have read in the OT. The commandments remain the same, but now the Law shows the need all sinners have of Christ. It also shows how to live in gratitude for the gift of salvation; and it restrains evil in society to some extent.

Conclusion: