

## **GOD ALWAYS JUDGES FAIRLY**

### **TEXT: ROMANS 2:12-16**

#### **INTRODUCTION:**

1. I concluded last week with ten "Principles of God's Judgment" by William Newell. It is...
  - i. is according to truth (2:2).
  - ii. is inescapable (2:3).
  - iii. is sometimes delayed (2:4).
  - iv. is measured out according to the accumulation of guilt (2:5).
  - v. is according to works (2:6).
  - vi. is according to privilege or light received (2:9).
  - vii. is without respect of persons (2:11).
  - viii. is according to performance, not knowledge (2:13).
  - ix. will take into account the secrets of men's heart (2:16).
  - x. is according to reality, not religious profession (2:17-29).
2. The book of Romans stresses that God judges sin (1:18, 32). Man is "without excuse" (1:20). He is "inexcusable" (2:1).
3. Sinners cannot escape the judgment of God (2:3).
4. It is "the righteous judgment of God" (2:5).
5. Judgment is for all -- Jew and Gentile alike (2:8-11).
6. W.H. Griffith Thomas said, "The standard (of judgment) for the Jew will be the law of Moses, but the standard for the Gentile will be the law of conscience" (*St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*).
7. Sinners often complain that God is not fair. The people in Ezekiel's day said, "The way of the Lord is not equal (not fair)" (Ezek. 18:25, 29; 33:17, 20).
8. But God reminded them, "Hear now, O house of Israel; Is not my way equal? are not your ways unequal?" (18:25b). They were the ones who were not fair, not God.
9. Tonight we will see that God is always fair, and He always judges fairly.

### **I. MEN ARE JUDGED ACCORDING TO THE LIGHT GOD HAS GIVEN THEM.**

1. Men are not saved by the light they have; but they are judged by the light they have. Romans 2:15 says those without the

moral law of God (the Gentiles) shall be judged according to "the work of the law written in their hearts."

2. Men have the basic moral concepts which underlie the law, for God's moral laws have been handed down from antiquity.
3. Consider Joseph's brothers. They did not have the law of Moses, for they lived over 200 years before God gave the law to Moses (Genesis 42:21, 22).
4. This is the law of retribution. Their conscience was bothering them twenty years after they sold Joseph into slavery.
5. Romans 2:15 says, "their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another."
6. If men have sinned "without law" (2:12), then they "shall also perish without law." "And as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law" (2:12).
7. "Perish" (2:12) means they will go to hell for their sin. This is a strong argument for missions. Missionaries all over the world have testified that primitive people already know it is wrong to murder and steal and lie, though they have never seen a Bible or met a Christian (2:14, 15).
8. In addition to their conscience, Gentiles have the witness of God in creation (cf. 1:19, 20). They have the knowledge of good and evil and are therefore morally responsible.
9. Every man is born with some measure of light. John 1:9 says Jesus "was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world."
10. When men respond to this light, God gives more light. For example, in Acts 10:2 we see that Cornelius was "a devout man, and one that feared God with all his house, which gave much alms to the people, and prayed to God alway."
11. God gave him more light and when he heard Peter preach the Gospel he was saved. There are several similar conversions in the book of Acts.
12. On the other hand, those who reject God's light will be judged severely (cf. Mark 6:10, 11). The greater the privileges, the greater the responsibility.

## **II. MEN ARE NOT JUSTIFIED BY HEARING THE LAW (2:13).**

1. This is an important Biblical principle -- knowing the law, but not obeying the law dishonors God (cf. 2:23).

2. The law is insufficient to justify sinners before God.
3. James 1:22 says, "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves." Many religious people (especially the Jews who were very proud) are "deceived."
4. Our Lord said, "Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it" (Matthew 7:24-27).
5. Galatians 3:10 says, "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them."
6. Regarding our text here in Romans chapter 2, A.C. Gaebelien said, "The entire passage deals with the judgment of a righteous God and that neither the Gentile without the law nor the Jew with the law is righteous before God, but that both classes must fall under the judgment of God. And there is a day appointed when this righteous judgment will be executed by the Son of Man, our Lord. And that none can be just by doing is seen in Paul's defense of the Gospel."

### **III. GOD SHALL JUDGE THE SECRETS OF MEN (2:16).**

1. Psalm 44:21 says God "knoweth the secrets of the heart."
2. Romans 2:13-15 are in parentheses. Therefore, verse 16 follows verse 12 -- "For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law...In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel."
3. There is a day appointed when the righteous judgment of God will be executed by the Lord Jesus Christ.

4. Paul said in Acts 17:30 and 31, that God "commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."
5. Our Lord referred to this in John 5:22, "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son."
6. And He said in John 5:27 that God "hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man."
7. First Peter 4:5 says Christ is "ready to judge the quick and the dead."
8. "God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ" (Romans 2:16). Ecclesiastes 12:14 says, "For God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."
9. Our Lord said in Matthew 10:26, "For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known."
10. Our Lord said in Luke 8:17, "For nothing is secret, that shall not be made manifest; neither any thing hid, that shall not be known and come abroad."
11. First Corinthians 4:5 says, "Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."
12. Second Timothy 4:1 says the Lord Jesus Christ, "shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom."
13. Albert Barnes says the expression, "the secrets of men" "denotes the hidden desires, lusts, passions, and motives of men; the thoughts of the hearts, as well as the outward actions of the life. It will be a characteristic of the day of judgment, that all these will be brought out, and receive their appropriate reward."

### **CONCLUSION:**

Albert Barnes said "the propriety of this (judgment) is apparent, for

(1.) it is by these that the character is really determined. The motives and principles of a man constitute his character, and to judge him impartially these must be known.

(2.) They are not judged or rewarded in this life. The external conduct only can be seen by men, and of course that only can be rewarded or punished here.

(3.) Men of pure motives and pure hearts are often here...persecuted, traduced, and often overwhelmed with ignominy. It is proper that the *secret* motives of their conduct should be brought out, and approved. On the other hand, men of base motives--men of unprincipled character, and who are corrupt at the heart--are often lauded, flattered, and exalted into public estimation. It is proper that their secret principles should be detected, and that they should take their proper place in the government of God.