

“Law and Judgment”

Romans The Gospel of God

Romans 2:12-16

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Jeff: Our Father in heaven, we are so thankful to gather in Your presence this morning. We're thankful to open Your word. We're thankful to be in it. Lord, we know that You teach us from Your word. You shape Christ in us as a result of Your Spirit working with that Word, taking it into our lives and using it as a tool. Father, we thank You for that. We pray that You will continue to do so.

Lord, as we stand before You this morning, we are reminded that we are often dull; we're often sluggish. We don't really look at You as we ought—the holy God who is *ase*, who is immutable, who is sovereign. And Father, as we do that, we pray that You will help us to tremble before You, not as slaves but certainly as sons. And we ask, Father, that as we tremble that there would be that deepening of respect and that heightening of love, and certainly that understanding of what You've done in our lives through the Lord Jesus Christ Your beloved Son, that we might have life and have it abundantly, not only in the present life but also and much more in the life to come. And so we look forward to the consummation of all things in Him.

And Father, as we do, we pray for those we love. We are thankful for Bob's grandson and his wellness. Lord, we're thankful that You are a prayer-hearing and answering God. Father, we're also thankful for Bruce, and we pray that You will not only bless him and strengthen him, but also his wife as well as she tends and cares for him. But also as they look forward to and anticipate this dinner from the Blessing Board in honor of him, we're thankful for that. We pray not only that it would be honoring to Bruce, but we expect that it will be honoring to You as well.

Father, we ask that You will bless us today as we open Your word in the book of Romans together. And we pray that as we do that we would be more and more familiar with the arguments from the letter to the Romans, but also that the letter to the Romans would be written upon our lives. And for that we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen.

Jeff: All right. Well, let me invite you to turn with me to Romans chapter 2. And today we're going to look at a fairly short section of Romans—2:12-16. And so let me read that to you—Romans 2:12-16. As I read it to you let me remind you that this is the word of the living God.

“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. For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.

“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. 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, on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.” This is the word of the Lord.

Brave Men: Thanks be to God.

Jeff: All right. So today we're going to look at this particular text. And I'm calling this a friend text. I think this is one of those texts that we think of when we think of the good

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people in our lives—the good neighbor in our lives, or the good uncle or the good cousin. And by that I mean not a Christian person, but a good person—one that we might call a good, moral, upright guy. He doesn't steal. He doesn't cheat. He's faithful to his wife. He helps his neighbor. He does all of those things. And we say, “Oh, he's a pretty good guy. He's a helpful fellow. He's not a Christian, but.” That's the kind of language we use when we talk about this kind of guy. And we all know the kind of guy that I'm talking about. You know the kind of situation you find yourself in when you find yourself with a person like this.

And if you think about Dante's *Inferno*, this is the guy that's on the outermost part of the ring of fire. He's getting burned, but not badly, right?—that kind of guy.

So when you think about this text we have the tendency to think about that kind of person—the good guy. And here's what I want you to understand about them. I want you to understand that this text tells us that the friend that we love, the friend that we call a good guy, his goodness is a testimony against him. And their goodness will actually rise up and speak against them on the day of reckoning.

Now when we think about that, that's a sobering thought, because you don't have a tendency to think like that. What we have a tendency to do is to think, well, he's a good guy. And surely there's a place in heaven for good guys who may not know Jesus or profess faith in Him, and live their lives following after Him. But he's a good guy. And surely there's a place in heaven for him.

But this text says exactly the opposite. This text says that the goodness of the good guy will rise up against him as testimony before an impartial Judge. And he will find himself getting exactly what he deserves.

Now that's the idea; I want to start here. I want to start with chapter 2 and verse 6. Do you remember what that says? In chapter 2 verse 6 it says that this is God. *“He will render to each one according to his works.”*

Now before I answer the question “what works?”, let me remind you a little bit about the book of Romans and about the flow of it thus far. At least in general, when you think about Romans, you have a tendency to think that 1:1-17 is introductory. But then you find yourself immediately confronted with 1:18 through the rest of the chapter. And we have a tendency to think to ourselves that this is the Gentile. This is the Gentile who is godless. This is the Gentile who lives life outside of the parameters of God's law. He is the one who gives himself over to unnatural desires, and so forth. This is the person who consents to and gives approval to those who do give their lives to these things. So 1:18 through the rest of the chapter is about the Gentile.

And that seems to be confirmed when you get to 2:1 and following. Actually, 2:1 ff. takes us to the Jewish man who says, “Yes, Paul; you're absolutely right. Those Gentiles are bad. You preach it, brother!”

And then Paul turns around and says to the Jewish man in 2:6-11, “Well, let me just tell you something, fellow. You stand in judgment just like him.”

Transcriber's Note: Romans 2:6-11, NKJV. *“God, ‘who will render to each one according to his deeds’: eternal life to those who by patient continuance in doing good seek for glory, honor, and immortality; but to those who are self-seeking and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness—indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek; but glory, honor,*

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and peace to everyone who works what is good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.”

Jeff: “You have the law, and the law condemns you because an impartial Judge applies it to you.” And then we start into 12-16, and now we’re dealing with the Gentile.

So someone might cry out, “Foul! Wait a minute; you’re taking us back to 2:6. And that had to do with the Jews. The Jews have the law. And the Jews are judged according to the law. But this is the Gentiles.”

And the Gentile stands up and says, “Wait a minute! I don’t have the law. And so how can I be judged by the law? How can I render to God the things due Him if I don’t even know what’s required of me?”

That’s the situation. So we have to ask ourselves when we think about 2:6: *“He will render to each according to his works”*,

Transcriber’s Note: ESV.

Jeff: We have to ask the question. What works? This is the pragmatic question we’re asking: what are those works?

Well, I think the answer to that is simply the law, and even more specifically the Decalogue, or what we call the Ten Commandments. I think the moral law of God is at least in view here. And when we think about the moral law of God we think about the first four being how we love God, and the last six being how we love our neighbor. And so what is in view is the moral commandments of God.

Now the question is, is this for the Jew? Well, it’s obviously for the Jew, because remember that in Exodus 19 we find the base of Mount Sinai. In Exodus 20 and 21 we find God giving the law to Moses on Sinai. It is obviously for the Jew. They are under the law; they are judged by the law. This is obviously meant for the Jew. That makes sense; it stands to reason. The question is, how can we apply it here? That’s the question. What about the Gentile?

What about the Gentiles? They are claiming “I don’t have the law. So how can You judge me according to my works when those works are going to be placed up against the standard of the law. They’re going to be found wanting. I never had the law. So how can You judge me according to my works, according to the things that I’ve done?”

I want you to think about it like this. Our text is meant for the Gentiles; we need to understand that. And I want you to understand that it says this in our text. And one might appeal to this. It says, *“For all those 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.”*

Now in verse 12 that looks like Paul is conceding to our point. It looks as if he’s saying that they perish without the law. Well, those are Gentiles. But you fail to follow the law: those are the Jews.

Verse 13. *“For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified.”*

Again, it looks like Paul is conceding. It looks as if he’s saying, “Well, if you don’t have the law you can’t be a hearer of the law. And if you’re not a hearer of the law you can’t be an adherent of the law. And if you can’t be an adherent to the law, well you can’t be justified by the law, nor can you be condemned by the law.”

In fact, when you get up to verse 12, it says, *“For all who have sinned without the law will perish without the law.”* The question has to be, how do we know who sins without the law? Because that’s the way we typically think, right? We typically think, well, the

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law tells us what’s right and what’s wrong. And if I sin then I’ve broken the law. And here he says that we sin without the law. How is that?

All of a sudden we find ourselves in a situation where we realize that Paul is driving us to think in a way that we may not typically think. How is that? There is no law. How is there adhering or how is there adherence? And yet he’s seemingly driving the Gentile into a position to acknowledge that he has sinned before God by breaking the law. How can that be possible?

Well, let me give you an example. But before I give you an example, let me just hit the pause button for a minute here. In my research I told you that I was going to talk to you about the life of Don. *(Laughter)*

Transcriber’s Note: Don Maurer.

Jeff: Well, I came across some footage of Don. This is his first driving lesson. I told you that you shouldn’t have done this.

Transcriber’s Note: A picture of a cane outside a car window.

Don Maurer: May 31, 1972, in the parking lot of Moon High School.

Ted: Oh, wow!

Jeff: And we have it.

Don: Wow!

Jeff: And we have it. And I just want you to look. *(Laughter)*

Don: A cane outside the car window. That’s pretty accurate! *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Well you know, I told you that I let Don go for far too long. *(Laughter)* I feel like a punching bag. I said that I’ve got to dig up some footage on Don.

Don: Jeff, I’ll tell you what.

Jeff: Yeah.

Don: I never knew. I never realized that day, when I was in that driver’s ed car, driving in that parking lot, that you were there and I didn’t even know it. *(Laughter)*

Ted: He’s older than he looks. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: All right. Now I want you to think about the example here. I want you to think that you’re driving down a back country road. And you’re driving down this back country road. And there’s no sign that says what the speed limit is. So you decide that you’re going to play it safe and you’re going to go about 40 or 45.

So you’re driving along, and all of a sudden you see the lights come up behind you. You pull over, and a police officer says, “You, young man, were breaking the law.” By the way, Clay was telling me the story. *(Laughter)* No, I’m just kidding. *(Laughter)* And so the officer comes up to Clay—well, this is a made-up story. *(Laughter)* He comes up to Clay and says to Clay, “Do you know, young man, that you’re breaking the law?”

And Clay says, “You know, officer, I may have been breaking the law. But I didn’t realize I was breaking the law because I’d been driving this road for miles and miles and miles, and there’s no posting. There’s no sign that says how fast or slow I should go. So I just chose the safe speed. I thought that most back roads are 45. I’d been going around 40 or 45, so that’s how I made my decision.”

And the police officer looks at him and says, “Young man, it is not posted. But the speed limit on this road is 25, and you’ve broken the law. And you’re going to be fined.”

Now who among us would not immediately appeal that ticket and fight it? It’s not posted. The police officer told me it wasn’t posted, but informed me that there was a speed limit that they weren’t going to let anybody know about. And he didn’t let me

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know about it, and fined me anyway. How many of us would think that’s fair? I can’t think of any of us who would think that’s fair.

And yet that feels very much like what we have here. You Gentiles don’t have the law. But you’re going to be judged by the law by an impartial Judge who will apply the law to you in judgment.

And the Gentile is going, “But wait! How can that be fair?” That’s what’s going on here; that’s the back and forth here. It’s not fair. That would be unfair. So how is it fair that God will judge the Gentiles by a law that they do not have? That’s the question we have to ask ourselves.

Now they may not have the law. But this is the point of our text, and here’s the crux of it. The Gentile does what the law requires. Now that’s where Paul starts to take us in a different direction. They may not have the law like the Israelite has the law. But they do what the law requires.

Now that’s going to open us up into some new thinking. They do what the law requires. The question that we have to ask is how? How do they do what the law requires when they don’t have the law?

Well, the first thing I want to say to you—and I need to just be clear about this—is that I am not saying, and Paul is certainly not saying, that when they do what the law requires that they do it perfectly. That’s not what Paul is saying.

But second, sometimes they do what the law requires—not perfectly,—but sometimes they do what the law requires. Now when they do what the law requires we have to ask how it is that they do that when they don’t have it. The answer is this. They do it by nature. That’s what Paul says. They do it by nature.

Now let me ask you a question. What do we mean when we say that they do it by nature? Just give me some examples; you know that phrase “by nature.” What is Paul wanting us to think when he says that they do it by nature? Yes, Don?

Don Maurer: A couple weeks ago Caleb talked about a missionary he knew who visited a tribe. And they didn’t have the bible, they didn’t have anything like that. But they still believed that it was wrong to commit adultery, to commit murder. And so even though Gentiles don’t have the law, they do those things by nature. They know within themselves that certain things are right and certain things are wrong.

Jeff: Yeah. How do they know that? I mean, when we talk about this by nature, and we talk about what C. S. Lewis would talk about—the *dao*, right?—the morality that sort of spreads over the face of the whole earth.

You can compare moralities and they seem very similar, you know? I mean, even when you have a deviant morality like cannibalism, there are even certain rules within cannibalism that you can’t transgress, or else you lose your own life. So there are these laws, even in the most deviant of cultures. So how do we explain “by nature?”

Paul Deffenbaugh: Conscience.

Jeff: Okay.

Sig Tragard: What did he say?

Paul: Conscience.

Jeff: Conscience. Now we’re going to talk about conscience. This is the tough thing, right?, because he’s going to bring in this idea of conscience. And the question that we have to ask ourselves is, what is conscience?

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But before we answer this vital question, what is conscience?, let’s kind of stick with “by nature.” Well, let me give you this next text and you can work with it. Look at romans 1, verses 26 and 27 for a minute. Take a look at that and then work with the question of “by nature” again. Somebody read it out loud.

Ted: *“For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature.”*

Jeff: Okay.

Ted: Should I go ahead?

Jeff: Yes, go ahead; yes, please.

Ted: *“And men likewise gave up natural relations with women, and were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men, receiving within themselves the due penalty for their error.”*

Jeff: Okay. So when Paul talks about “by nature,” and he talks about giving up what is natural for that which is unnatural, he’s not just talking about conscience there, right? There’s something more to it. What does he have in mind?

Ted: I’ve thought a lot about this. Outside of the gospel, what is the purpose of life? And I think that the purpose of life is to reproduce. And I think that even atheistic scientists—I was listening to a podcast the other day—would say that’s the purpose, the only discernible purpose we have. So doing these unnatural acts is contrary to reproducing. We eat, we sleep, we defend ourselves, we clothe ourselves in order to reproduce.

Jeff: Okay.

Ted: That’s what biology would tell us; this is the natural thing.

Jeff: Okay.

Ted: They don’t like that, though.

Jeff: Let’s take that. Let’s just take Genesis 1. What is it, 26-27?—the mandate to be fruitful and multiply? So you’re saying that this commandment of God to man in the Garden is something so natural that he doesn’t even need to know Genesis 1:26-27 to be inclined toward it.

Transcriber’s Note: Genesis 1:26-28a, , NKJV. *“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them. Then God blessed them, and God said to them, ‘Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it.’”*

Ted: Right. Even amoebas do it. For all living things that’s their end goal.

Jeff: But is that their inward inclination?

Ted: It’s the way that nature is set up.

Jeff: Okay. So now it’s not just something that I am inclined to. You’re saying that there is a fixedness in the way nature is.

Ted: We would say that God does that. The atheistic scientists say they don’t know why. We say we know why.

Jeff: Yeah, right.

Ted: They’re still not happy with the answer. I think you’re still unhappy with the answer. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: No, no. I’m—

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Ted: I mean, here’s the discussion. I think that Christians are poorly prepared to answer the question of why a homosexual lifestyle isn’t okay.

Jeff: Uh-huh.

Ted: And I think that Catholics tend to go the way of that it’s against nature—that all of life since the very beginning of life, even down to the smallest part of life—the one-celled amoeba—all live and exist to reproduce. And homosexual behavior does not reproduce.

Jeff: Yes. It’s not that I don’t like your answer. I think your answer is in keeping with Romans. I mean, when you think back to Romans 1:18 ff., he talks about this being contrary to nature. And yet he says that the Gentiles do by nature what is consistent with the law. In other words, let me just slip this in really quickly. But I want to keep that in this conversation.

If the Gentile doesn’t always disobey nature, then he cannot totally suppress it. They don’t totally suppress the truth in unrighteousness.

You know, I always give the example of Francis Crick capitalizing—what is it?—

Paul: DNA? RNA?

Jeff: Yeah. But he capitalizes the c in cell, or something like that.

Paul: DNA and RNA was Crick and Watson, right?

Jeff: Yes, but—Nature; he capitalized the n in nature, right? And Carl Sagan always capitalized the c in cosmos. And that follows Francis Schaeffer, who said that this is the truth slipping out; they need something bigger than themselves to give order to everything.

Ted: That’s absolutely right.

Jeff: But the fact of the matter is that when the Gentile does anything that is congruent with the law, he is not suppressing the truth in unrighteousness. But he’s actually testifying to the goodness of the law. Okay?

So when you think about “by nature,” there’s a fittedness. God created us. It’s almost as if the world expected us. Can I put it like this, because you guys are all men? I don’t see any little boys here. It’s almost as if the penis and the vagina were meant to go together to reproduce. Can I say that?

Ted: That’s great news. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: Thanks. *(Laughter)*

Ted: I’ve always wondered about that. *(Laughter)*

Jeff: That’s great.

Ted: I think this is really important, because people will say, “Well, what’s wrong with homosexual behavior?” And often the response will be “It’s against what the Bible says.” But even before that it’s against what nature says.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: So all of this—“do not murder, do not lie”—all of these activities support reproduction.

Jeff: Yes. And what we need to remember is that just because we now need special revelation to properly interpret general revelation, that doesn’t render general revelation unimportant. In other words, there’s a sense in which special revelation would be empty without general revelation, because special revelation is what comes along and tells us how we are to view general revelation and not only that, how we are to be saved, right? And not just us, but the whole world.

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Ted: I mean,--

Sig: We have another question back there somewhere.

Ted: Sorry.

Jeff: Go ahead.

Gary Dunbar: I would say first that all you had to do was speak to people in their various cultures.

Jeff: Uh-huh.

Gary: All they had to do was feed the animals and find out where they were at. But he says, *“They received in themselves the recompense of their error which was due.”* Isn’t he basically saying that given their behavior that they do totally suppress the truth in unrighteousness?

Jeff: Well, what I’m going to go on to say is when we get to conscience. What I’m going to say is that, for instance, they’re living in this realm where they’re trying to navigate right and wrong. But because they can’t escape the sense of divinity that God has placed in them, that internal general revelation that they do not have mediately, that doesn’t come to us through the trees and the rocks and all the world around us, but that comes immediately. God immediately testifies that He exists, and that they are dependent upon Him. They can’t escape that. So they must live with that. So it’s that which they suppress in unrighteousness.

But they can’t do that totally and consistently. I mean, think about it. They can’t do that totally and consistently. They need to borrow from God’s world view in order to suppress God’s world view. So they can’t suppress it totally, right?

I mean, it’s like the atheist professor in the university who tries to live his life contrary to every possible law of God. And yet, if the university chose not to pay him he would cry, *“That’s unfair!”*, right?—that kind of thing.

Don Bishop: It’s kind of like the argument that Ravi Zacharias used to use. A student comes up and says, *“I can’t believe in a God when there is so much evil in the world.”*

And he said, *“You say there’s evil in the world. Then you’re comparing it to something good. And you’re comparing it to something good and saying it’s evil because you’re agreeing that there is a law. So if there’s a law, there must be a Lawgiver. There must be a God.”*

Jeff: Yes. When you think about man in the Garden, created in the image of God, there is a sense in which not only is he fitted to nature, but he’s fitted to obedience to God.

Bob Busted: I just wanted to say that it’s an interesting thought here. So rape is natural, but the law says it’s wrong.

Ted: No, rape is not natural.

Jeff: So all of a sudden there you would enter into a violence and a motivation that would be against conscience. So now we’re not talking about an external act; now we’re talking about that which is internal—how one suppresses the truth of God internally. And they may do something natural. But they do it, for instance, in an unnatural way—outside of the bonds of marriage—for violence, for a sinful tendency or urge in them—you know, that sort of thing.

It’s sort of like the guy who says, *“I need a car to get to work.”* So he goes out and steals the car. He uses the car in all sorts of natural ways, right? But you know, he has sinned in that sense. But he says, *“But I needed it to get to work.”* Okay.

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Ted: Here’s what I would add to that. If everybody does that, the majority, then chaos reigns. I mean, even rape is against nature.

Jeff: But he’s just talking about the natural—

Ted: Right. But I think violence that is ultimately unrestrained is going to kill everybody.

Jeff: Sure.

Ted: That’s why, if you watch animals—and I’ve been observing this at home—if you watch animals they do a lot of show when they confront each other. But they try to avoid the actual conflict, because even an injury will effectively kill them. So it’s against our nature to do the things that we count as wrong, because it works against our best interests.

Jeff: Sure. I mean, think about it. Take rape off the table and just put in premarital sex between two young people who may not end up marrying.

Ted: Yeah.

Jeff: You know, that’s going to be a regrettable scenario.

Ted: It is.

Jeff: Right.

Ted: Because it gets too blasted complicated—all the ramifications of it,—because you can’t just have premarital sex by yourself; it affects others. It affects families and others—the girl friend, the other girl friend who has been jilted. I mean, it just goes on and on and on.

Jeff: Sure. Yes, absolutely. And that’s the way even doing the natural outside of the confines of going back to Genesis 1:26—you know, one man, one woman. You know, it has a way of spoiling it.

Okay.

Sig: One more question.

Jeff: Oh, yes.

Don Rimbey: I just wanted to say that when we say “by nature,” it might help to clarify that we’re saying that it’s against the apparent design of nature.

Jeff: Yeah.

Don: That’s right. And also you used the example of rape. If someone were to rape his sister, you bet he would object to it.

Jeff: Sure.

Ted: Maybe kill him.

Don: That’s right.

Ted: As a lot of societies do.

Jeff: So these are natural impulses, because there is a fittedness to nature—honoring parents. You know, this is what Jesus says, right? Everybody honors their parents and takes care of their families; this is just natural. Even the Gentiles and tax collectors do that. No stealing, faithfulness, all of these things are natural impulses. And when they do these things, Paul says that they “*become a law to themselves.*”

Now the question that we have to ask is this. Do they become autonomous? Do they actually create their own law? That’s not what he’s saying. He’s saying that they are living according to what is implanted. They’re living according to that sense of fairness—that sense of justice, and so on and so forth. And when they do those things they’re showing that what God has revealed in them—Romans 1:18 ff.—what is revealed in

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them cannot be consistently and fully suppressed. It can't be because they have to borrow from this world view in order to suppress those things.

And so they judge themselves when they do this, when they act accordingly, when they do good according to what is in the law; they judge themselves.

Now think about that. He says this. I want you to think about it; this is an interesting thing. I'm actually not going to spend time here because we don't have time. But he says that “*the law is written on their hearts*”; at least that's our translation.

It's an interesting thing. That's not what the Greek says there. When you go back to Jeremiah 31:33, it says that the law is written “*upon*”—*epi*—upon the Christian's heart.

Transcriber's Note: Jeremiah 31:33, NKJV. “*But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: 'I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.'*”

Jeff: It's interesting. Here it says that the law is written *en*—in the heart of the unbeliever. Now I'm not sure that there's an enormous difference. But there is certainly a difference, because Paul takes that phrase and he actually changes the preposition. Now *en* can mean *on*, but it rarely means that. And so I'm just going to pass by that.

And second, it's in their hearts. By nature it is in their hearts.

Now what do we mean by that? Here is what takes us to conscience. Now what is conscience? I'm going to put it like this. What is it? John Murray says, “*Conscience is more of a function.*”

Now why did I put that up on the board? Well, I put that up on the board because I think we have a tendency to think of conscience as that little guy sitting on our shoulder, and he has wings. And he's going, “Don't do that bad thing!” (*Laughter*)

Transcriber's Note: Spoken in a high, squeaky voice.

Jeff: And on the other shoulder is the guy with the pitch fork. And he has muscles, and he's going, “Don't listen to that weakling over there! Do what you want!”

Transcriber's Note: Spoken in a very gruff voice.

Jeff: And he goes over there and he beats the living daylights out of the (*a shriek of pain*), and the guy goes “Yeah!” (*Laughter*) You know, that kind of thing? That's what we have a tendency to think of when we think of the conscience, or any number of other things. Or we say, “Let your conscience be your guide.”

And the thing that we have to ask when we get into that scenario is what's guiding the conscience? And so what is the conscience? This is why John Murray defines or describes conscience as “*more of a function*”—a moral function, a function wherein we are trying to navigate according to the *sensus divinitatus*, according to all that is around us—what is right and what is wrong. In other words, the unbeliever is trying to fit in the world that God has created. It's a realm of moral discrimination; he's trying to fit in.

So when he does right, Paul says that his conscience excuses him. When he does wrong it accuses him. When he does right he feels like he fits. When he does wrong he feels like he's an outsider.

And I'll just say this. When the homosexual community who does not do what's natural tries to force us to admit that what they're doing is natural, they're doing that because they know that they don't fit. That's the idea, right? You beat others into submission to acknowledge that no; we fit!, when in fact they know they don't fit. That's the idea.

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Ted: It’s almost like an adolescent response.

Jeff: Yeah.

Ted: It’s an inventory. The homosexual community responds by saying, “You must accept me.” And that’s a teenager’s feeling.

Jeff: Yes; sure. And it comes right out of Romans, right?

Ted: Yeah.

Jeff: In 1:18-32 they applaud the people who agree with them, right? They do.

So let’s return to our friend a minute. The activity of his conscience stands as a testimony against him. In other words, we now see why the goodness of the good guy stands as a testimony against him, because he does what the law requires, but he doesn’t do it perfectly. And what does God require of fallen man? He requires perfection.

You say, “But that’s not fair; I can’t offer perfection.” No; you see, that’s what Jesus came to do. Jesus came to obey the law perfectly because you couldn’t. And by the way, He also came to take upon Himself your punishment for having broken the law. So not only did He satisfy every requirement of the law; He satisfied the curse of the law as well.

And so the answer to this dilemma is in one sense very easy. But the good guy’s good works are going to stand up as a testimony against him before a good God.

And that takes us to the last point. *God will judge.* And Paul takes us back here, first of all to what he said to the Jews. God is an impartial Judge. And He’ll apply the law impartially.

And so when you get to the Gentile here who does the things that the law requires—not perfectly—but when he does them he’s showing that he knows his fittedness. He understands to some degree the *sensus divinitatus*, and he suppresses it or seeks to suppress it in unrighteousness. And yet when he does it, and when he does the right thing and he’s excused by his conscience, that’s actually a testimony against him—that you know the right thing to do and you don’t do it. And so God, the impartial Judge, will judge the good guy.

And secondly, this is the thing. It kind of gets us beyond all the natural fittedness stuff. God judges the secrets of men’s hearts. And that’s the tough thing, wherein we’re laid bare before the living God. It’s not just our behavior. This is what the Jew has to contend with in the book of Romans. He can’t just say, “Yeah, look at those Gentiles doing all those bad things!” Paul says, “Yes, but isn’t the Gentile doing those bad things? And you are doing bad things.” But it’s not just bad things. It’s the secret things of the heart that God will lay bare and judge.

And you know as well as I do that it’s those things that you lock up in your mind. And you take them out, and you don’t think anybody is looking. And then you entertain them, right? And it’s those kinds of things that an impartial Judge knows about and will judge.

And here is what I think is the most frightening thing about this whole text. The most frightening thing about this whole text is to ask the question how? And the answer is “by *Christ Jesus.*”

And when I think about this I think about Revelation 6:16-17.

Transcriber’s Note: Revelation 6:15-17, NKJV. “*And the kings of the earth, the great men, the rich men, the commanders, the mighty men, every slave and every free man, hid themselves in the caves and in the rocks of the mountains, and said to the mountains and*

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rocks, ‘Fall on us and hide us from the face of Him who sits on the throne and from the wrath of the Lamb! For the great day of His wrath has come, and who is able to stand?’”

Jeff: You know, where it talks in Revelation, especially in chapters 4 and 5, where it talks about the throne room of God and the Lamb of God who stands in the midst of the throne room, and the Lamb who looks as if He has been slain—the Lamb who was “*slain from before the foundation of the world*” for the sins of men, women and children. Well, when you get to Revelation chapter 6, verses 16 and 17, it talks about how the unbelieving could not stand before the wrath of the Lamb.

And that’s one of those phrases that just grips you, doesn’t it? Because the Lamb that was slain, who came to seek and to save, is the Lamb who will exercise His wrath on the unbelieving. He will judge the secrets of the heart, and He’ll lay them bare. That’s the idea.

And so that’s all I have today. Do you have any questions that you want to think about for the last minute before we wind everything down?

Sig: I have one question.

Jeff: Sure.

Sig: At some point I know you’re going to get to this. But you started out with the moral friend whose goodness is a testimony against him. Well, our goodness is a testimony against us, even though we have been sanctified by Christ and born again. So at some point we’ve got to wrestle with the sufficiency of Christ to save people from their sins. I don’t understand the Revelation passage. I mean, that’s certainly alarming. But I think there’s an element there that you didn’t touch on today. The moral friend, that could be me. You know, I try to do good things; you know what I’m saying. So where does the sufficiency of Christ come in to cover our sins for all of us—Jew, Gentile, saved, unsaved? The works won’t do it; we know that, right?

Jeff: It’s not a blanket stretched across the world where God says, “I’ve forgiven you; you just have to come to that realization.” The Scriptures are very clear. It’s those who repent and believe who receive the forgiveness that is in Christ. And Paul is going to deal with them in Romans chapter 7. You know, Paul is going to say that “the good that I want to do I don’t do,” right? But “who is going to save me from this body of death? Well, it’s Jesus Christ in whom I put my trust.”

And so it’s not a blanket for everyone. It is a blanket invitation. But it’s not a blanket in the sense that the Jews who aren’t acknowledging the Messiah and who don’t have any time for Him are already forgiven and just have to acknowledge it. That’s not what I read in the Scriptures. I read in the Scriptures that those who repent and believe with faith in Christ Jesus are those who have Christ’s sufficiency to save them. And their lives manifest it by the imputation of His righteousness and by the good works that proceed from that. They still struggle; that’s Romans 7. There’s going to be a time when we are changed “*in the twinkling of an eye*”—1 Corinthians 15—and we won’t struggle anymore with sin or this life in any way. But that’s for the believer who puts faith and trust in Christ. That’s where I would go with that.

I mean, I know that the thing that all of us want is for everyone to be saved—at least every one of our close relatives who aren’t believing, or those we love who repudiate the gospel. But the fact of the matter is that as I read the Scriptures I don’t see that as the case. There are people that go to hell and there are people that go to heaven. The people that go to heaven are in Christ; the people who go to hell are outside of Christ. I think

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that’s how the Scriptures read. Anybody else before we go? Okay, let me pray with you guys and then we’ll close.

Father, thank You for this day, for the time You’ve given, for the love of Christ shed abroad in our hearts by your Mighty Spirit. Lord, we pray that You’ll work that leaven of forgiveness in us, that we might understand not only the forgiveness that we have in Christ, but also that we might extend that forgiveness to others who have sinned against us. Father, we pray and we ask that Your hand of mercy would rest upon us for good. We pray, Father, that a text like this one would be a motivation to us, that we might reach out to the good neighbor, the good friend that we have, and that we might winsomely speak the gospel, the word of life, into his life, and help him to see that there is no place in heaven for him, but that his goodness is a judgment against him. And so he needs to put his faith in Christ. Father, help us to winsomely say those things to people. And we pray it in Jesus’ name. Amen.

Brave Men: Amen. (*Applause*)