

Romans (10):
The Future Judgment of works (cont.)
(Rom. 2:6-11)

Introduction:

I am reading through the history of the Soviet Union gulag system under Joseph Stalin. It is a literary classic by Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, entitled, *The Gulag Archipelago*. An archipelago is a group of islands surrounded by the ocean. Solzhenitsyn described the Soviet prison camp system to be like thousands of little islands scattered throughout his country with little connection or interchange with the towns and cities that were outside their fences. In this book the author describes what it was like to be arrested and interrogated. In the middle of the night the police would go throughout a city and make arrests. But the people taken from their homes were clueless as to what they had done that would warrant their arrest. And even through the process of interrogation, which often involved torture, they expected to be released, for after all, they were innocent. But actually the police were arresting any and all that they thought were vulnerable and of sound body, for they had a quota to meet each month. If the police did not send their quota, they themselves were arrested and sent to the labor force of the gulags.

One day or one night the Lord Jesus will return. All of us, each of us, will be taken from our homes. We will be separated from one another and each of us will be brought before the Lord to answer to the things that we have done in this life, both good and bad. Paul stated it this way:

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil.” (2 Cor. 5:10)

But unlike those millions upon millions of Soviet citizens who went to their fate protesting their innocence, each and every one who is damned of God will know that they have received justice from the One on the throne, for

He shall not judge by what his eyes see, or decide disputes by what his ears hear, ⁴but with righteousness he shall judge the poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall strike the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips he shall kill the wicked. ⁵Righteousness shall be the belt of his waist, and faithfulness the belt of his loins. (Isa. 11:3-5)

The passage before us today, **Romans 2:12-16**, shows that God will be just in His final judgment of the world. There will be no protests of any merit against God’s dealings with them. For they will all be judged rightly and sentenced justly. But further, those who are damned will no they are receiving what they deserve. Our text reads:

¹²For 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. ¹³For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. ¹⁴For 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. ¹⁵They 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 ¹⁶on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus. (Rom. 2:12-16)

This paragraph of Scripture contains several statements that are troublesome and difficult to understand rightly. There are different opinions of different men of what Paul intended to say through his words. We will need to be careful as we work through these verses.

I. The meaning of the text

In **verse 12** the apostle sets forth the truth that God will judge people according to the knowledge of His law to which they had available during their lifetime. ***“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.”*** Paul first described the Gentiles in general. God had not blessed the Gentiles with His law that He had given to the Jews at Mount Sinai through Moses¹; they were “without the law” that God had given to His people, Israel. Paul declared that they will “perish” without the law. In other words they shall be condemned at the judgment even though they did not have the written Word of God—His law.

Some would say that to “perish” means to be annihilated, to cease to exist as a punishment of God. But the Bible describes *perishing* as the fate of the one who faces the judgment of God, when he is consigned under His sentence and punishment of hell.

Now, elsewhere we read that one definition of sin is that *sin is a transgression of God’s law*. **1 John 3:4** reads, “Everyone who makes a practice of sinning also practices lawlessness; *sin is lawlessness.*” In other words, sin is a transgression of God’s law. Paul also wrote later in Romans, “for sin indeed was in the world before the law was given, ***but sin is not counted where there is no law***” (Rom. 5:13). And so, this means that where the law of God is not present, sin as a transgression against God’s law is not present. In fact Paul declared this truth in another place. Paul wrote, “For the law brings wrath, but where there is no law there is no transgression” (Rom. 4:15). In other words, Paul was saying that the law of God incurs God’s wrath upon lawbreakers. And so where God’s law is not present, there is no sin as transgression of God’s law. And yet, Paul in Romans 4:12 wrote, ***“For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law.”*** Here then is a “question” that Paul seems to be hinting at in Romans 2:12; If “perishing” is the just punishment of God for sin, and yet Gentiles were “without the law”, how is it that they too will perish, those who were without His law? Paul actually gives two answers to this question. (1) Later in Romans he will explain that people died before God gave His law through Moses, because Adam had broke God’s law in the Garden of Eden, and the sentence upon the guilt of that transgression of the “law” that God had given to Adam had come upon the entire human race. (Cf. **Rom. 5:12-14**). (2) Paul states later (2:15) that although the Gentiles did not have the written law of God as did the Jews, they had the presence of God’s law in a measure as an aspect of their human nature, because God had given to all human beings an inherent, knowledge of His law, even though that knowledge had been obscured and perverted through sin.²

Before we proceed beyond verse 12, let us recall what Paul is demonstrating in this section of his epistle and how he used the truth of this statement to further his argument. Paul is arguing that all human beings are sinners who are deserving of the wrath of God and therefore all the world is in need of the salvation that God provides exclusively through His Son, Jesus Christ. In verse 12, Paul is making the claim that the Jews are no better off than Gentiles respecting God’s future judgment of sinners. Gentiles will perish, but Jews will also receive the condemnation of God. Jews are not exempt from God’s judgment because they have been blessed with God’s revealed law to them. God will damn the Jews just as He will condemn the Gentiles. Again, ***“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.”***

But then Paul makes this statement in **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”***, or as the New King James Version reads, ***“For not the hearers of the law are just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified.”*** This is a particularly troublesome verse for numbers of interpreters of Romans. Why? In the second portion of this verse Paul declares that it will be ***“the doers of the law who will be justified”***;

¹ Cf. Romans 3:2.

² Cf. Romans 2:

meaning, the doers of the law will be exonerated, or saved, on the Day of Judgment. But how can this be? For Paul states elsewhere, in fact, in the next chapter, ***“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in His sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin”*** (Rom. 3:20). So, how can Paul say in 2:13 that it is ***“the doers of the law who will be justified”***, but turn about in 3:20 and say, ***“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight”***? This has led some liberals simply to charge Paul with inconsistency and making contradictory statements. Others argue that Paul must have only been proposing a hypothetical judgment according to works here in 2:13. But we see it differently. We believe that both statements are true, although they are paradoxical—they seem on the surface to be contradictory.

How then, may they both be seen as true statements? Let us first affirm that the Holy Spirit has inspired every word of Scripture to state truth with precision and consistency. We who believe that Word of God to be inspired of God believe in what is called “the analogy of faith.” This means that the Holy Bible is wholly true in its statements and that there is consistency and coherency in all of its teachings.

Since this is the case, we should look carefully and read carefully what the Word declares and take note of what the Word is not saying. In Romans 3:20 we read Paul’s statement of truth, ***“For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.”*** Here Paul is declaring that no sinner can save himself *by* or *through* keeping God’s laws. In other words, works cannot be the reason that people become justified in God’s sight. Paul makes it clear that only through faith alone can sinners *become* justified by God. But if read Romans 2:13 carefully, we see that Paul did *not* make the claim that keeping God’s law was the *means* or the *grounds* for their justification before God; ***he was simply describing what justified people are like—they are keepers of God’s law.*** On the Day of Judgment God’s law will be the standard of God’s judgment. Those who have been justified by God’s grace alone, through faith alone, apart from the works of the law, will show forth themselves as true believers, because they were ones who will be shown to have been “law-keepers” in this life.

This does not mean that Christians are perfect law-keepers. Only Jesus Christ kept God’s law fully without committing any infraction. But Christians, who are enabled by the work of regeneration that God has performed in them—giving them new hearts--and by the power of the Holy Spirit that their enthroned Lord Jesus freely gives to them, are able to live according to God’s law generally in their lives. They thereby prove that they are Christians. “And by this we know that we have come to know Him, if we keep His commandments” (1 John 2:3).

Verses 14, 15, and 16 are also verses on which there is difference of interpretation to best understand what Paul was saying.

14For 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. 15They 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 16on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

The first question that must be answered is this: What Gentiles was Paul speaking about? Is Paul referring to non-Christian Gentiles who had never heard God’s law, or is he referencing Christian Gentiles who have undergone conversion by God’s grace through Jesus Christ?

First, those who argue that Paul is referring to ***Christian Gentiles*** say that Paul was injecting in his argument against Jews, who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, that there are Gentiles who had never been given the law as God had given to Israel at Sinai, but who nevertheless keep God’s law as Christians who had been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and enabled by grace to keep God’s law. They argue that when Paul described these Christian Gentiles--***that the work of the law is written on their hearts*** --Paul was saying that they had been recipients of the new heart that God gives to those in the new covenant, that was promised through the prophet Jeremiah. In **Jeremiah 31:31ff** we read:

³¹“Behold, the days are coming, declares the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah, ³²not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant that they broke, though I was their husband, declares the LORD. ³³But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the LORD: ***I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts.*** And I will be their God, and they shall be my people. ³⁴And no longer shall each one teach his neighbor and each his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they shall all know me, from the least of them to the greatest, declares the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more.” (Jer. 31:31-34)

But it should be pointed out that Paul does not precisely say in verses 14-16 that God’s law was put within them and that God had written His law on their hearts in the new covenant. There is a difference between what Paul said in verse 13, “They show that ***the work*** of the law is written on their hearts”, and what God said through Jeremiah, “I will put my law within them, and I will write ***it*** (the law itself) on their hearts.”

Second, there are those who say these Gentiles of Romans 2:14-16 refer to Gentile ***non-Christians***. This is the right understanding. The point that Paul is making is that even though the unconverted Gentiles did not have the written Mosaic Law, they in effect possessed the law of God. This is consistent with classic Reformed theology, which understands the Bible to teach that when God had originally created Adam and Eve, having created them in His image, He had impressed upon their souls His moral law. All people everywhere possess this law in their souls. The entrance of sin originally defaced man’s conception of that law, but the law remains, albeit it is distorted through sin. Our further involvement in sin further obscures our knowledge of God’s moral law, the work of God’s law that is written upon our souls.

It may also be pointed out that Paul’s description of these Gentiles—***who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves***—is not a description that would readily fit Gentile Christians. Christians are never described elsewhere in the Scriptures as being “a law to themselves.” Paul is here describing unconverted Gentiles, who nevertheless possess an understanding of God’s law.

What then, was Paul saying about these Gentiles who never had the privilege of having God’s written law? Paul was saying that all people everywhere are moral creatures. Gentiles, who never had the written law of God (the Bible), nevertheless have an inward awareness of God’s moral law that engages their thinking. Their conscience, which is that faculty of the soul that passes judgment on whether one is doing right or wrong, uses this “awareness” of God’s law as the standard for making assessments. When a non-Christian makes decisions each and every day of a moral nature, his conscience will either affirm that he is doing right or it will trouble him, that he has done wrong.

Paul was not saying that these people could obtain salvation through their conscience. Even though there are occasions when their conscience “excuses” their behavior as not wrong or immoral. There will be ample witness to the myriad of occasions that their conscience convicted them of what they should have done but they chose to disregard that “inner voice” in order to sin against God. This “testimony” from their lives will be brought forward by God on the Day of Judgment to condemn these Gentiles, as Paul wrote, “***on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus***” (2:16).

II. Several Implications of our text

1. Once again, we see that God is going to judge us according to our works on the Day of Judgment. This was stated in the previous passage and it is affirmed here. Paul wrote that “***on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus***” (2:16). There will be a general judgment of mankind when Jsesu comes. As He taught in **Matthew 25:31-46**.

2. Although God has given us His moral law within our souls, the written Word of God that God has revealed through His prophets, apostles, and His Son, is the infallible law of God that should govern our lives. To the one that God has made known His written Word, that Word is to be his guide, not the “law” that he has inherently in his thinking. In other words, with the availability of the Bible, God’s Word, that Bible is to govern your life, not your conscience.

3. The conscience remains a guide, but it is not an infallible guide. The written Word of God, the Holy Scriptures, is our only infalible guide. Sin has distorted our conception of God’s law that God had given us through His common grace. The Christian is still to live according to his conscience, but our conscience should now pass judgment upon us according to God’s written Word, rather than the distorted conception of law that we had in our human nature.

Paul wrote of living so that his conscience was clear. In Acts 23:1 he declared before the Jewish leaders his clear conscience. “Then Paul, looking earnestly at the council, said, ‘Men and brethren, I have lived in all good conscience before God until this day.’”

4. When dealing with souls, attempt to affect the conscience of an individual respecting sin. It is not enough to know about sin intellectually only, but we must feel the guilt of it.

Spurgeon wrote in his classic book entitled *The Soul Winner*.

5. Parents, when training and disciplining your children, aim at their conscience as informed by the written Word of God.

6. Be aware that when you are dealing with people of the world who need Christ as their Lord and Savior, that they need to be made aware keenly of their guilt before God. You may know that they know that they are guilty, for God has put an awareness of His law in their soul and their conscience passes judgment within their thinking, even though they may withstand you to the face that they are perfectly content with what they are doing or what they are thinking.

7. The written law of God, which is found throughout the Holy Scriptures, resensitizes the conscience to good and evil and regravens the law that is already there so that it is more pronounced and the soul is made more aware of God’s righteousness and that His justice will one day hold him accountable.

8. The only way that the Christian can deal fully and faithfully before the Lord respecting His conscience, is to see afresh and apply afresh the benefit of the cross of Christ upon one’s soul.

We as Christians in this present age are a privileged people. There are causes for us who live this side of Calvary to receive benefits from Calvary that those believers under the old testament system never enjoyed. For example, the Epistle of the Hebrews speaks about the great obstacle that lay between an Old testament worshipper of God and his coming boldly into the presence of God. The Old Testament believer was plagued with a guilty conscience. We read of this Hebrews 10.

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices that are continually offered every year, make perfect those who draw near. ²Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, since the worshipers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have any consciousness of sins? ³But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sins every year. ⁴For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

⁵Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said,

“Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired,
but a body have you prepared for me;
⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings
you have taken no pleasure.
⁷Then I said, ‘Behold, I have come to do your will, O God,
as it is written of me in the scroll of the book.’”

⁸When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, “Behold, I have come to do your will.” He does away with the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

¹¹And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³waiting from that time until his enemies should be made a footstool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.

¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying,

¹⁶“This is the covenant that I will make with them
after those days, declares the Lord:
I will put my laws on their hearts,
and write them on their minds,”

¹⁷then he adds,

“I will remember their sins and their lawless deeds no more.”

¹⁸Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

¹⁹Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way that he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful. ²⁴And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near. (Heb. 10:1-25)

The withholding of the doctrine of the total depravity of man has wrought serious mischief to many who have listened to a certain kind of preaching. These people do not get a true healing because they do not know the disease under which they are suffering; they are never truly clothed because nothing is done towards stripping them. In many ministries, there is not enough of probing the heart and arousing the conscience by the revelation of man's alienation from God, and by the declaration of the selfishness and the wickedness of such a state. Men need to be told that, except divine grace shall bring them out of their enmity to God, they must eternally perish; and they must be reminded of the sovereignty of God, that He is not obliged to bring them out of this state, that He would be right and just if He left them in such a condition, that they have no merit to plead before Him, and no claims upon Him, but that if they are to be saved, it must be by grace, and by grace alone. The preacher's work is to throw sinners down in utter helplessness, that they may be compelled to look up to Him who alone can help them. (Spurgeon, *The Soul Winner*)

H. The Old Order a Shadow of the Reality (10:1-4)

Introduction:

Christ, the mediator of a new covenant, suffered once to put away sin thereby securing the benefits of the covenant for His people. These benefits include forgiveness of sin, a clear conscience, an assured entrance into heaven, and everlasting life, but principally, unbroken relationship between God and His people. The old system was incapable of providing these benefits; it was simply a shadow of what was to come in Christ.

(10:1) *"For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near."*

- cf. Col. 2:17; there Paul is primarily concerned with legal restrictions of the OT.

- Here, the concern is OT sacrifice and priesthood.

- Not a Platonic concept (vertical) as much as a temporal (horizontal, or linear) one.

- The main point of contrast for the writer continues to be the one sacrifice on the Day of Atonement as for shadowing Christ's cross.

(10:2) *"Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshippers, having once been cleansed, would no longer have had consciousness of sins?"*

- The writer assumes a fact about OT religion (and we might extend to all legalism): the Jewish priests and people possessed a guilty conscience which was never fully abated (unless they had seared their consciences).

- Some argue due to this verse that the temple was still standing at the time of the epistle's writing; therefore, the date of composition was prior to AD 70 at which time the Romans destroyed the Jerusalem and the temple.

(10:3) *"But in those sacrifices there is a reminder of sins year by year."*

- Every time a sacrifice was offered they were reminded of their sin and the guiltiness that it produced.

(10:4) *"For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins."*

- Committing sins is caused from, or results in, a number of "problems" which God had to overcome in order for us to have an eternal relationship with Him. There is:

- just condemnation from which we need pardon,
- a rebellious heart which needs replacement,
- a darkened mind which needs enlightenment,
- defilement which needs cleansing,
- a guilty conscience which needs purging,
- an enslaved behavior from which we need deliverance,

- The old covenant did not make provision for the real problem. Sacrifices of animals only stalled the inevitable, that being judgment, until the problem was dealt with in actuality through the work of Christ.

- Isaiah 1:10-15
- Jer. 6:16-21
- Amos 5:21-27
- Psalm 51:10,16f.

I. The New Order the Reality (10:5-10)

In contrast to what the old order could not deliver, the writer picks up Psalm 40:6-8 (a psalm of David) and applies the words as being voiced by David's son, Jesus, who as the Son of God came into the world to do His Father's will, to offer a sacrifice "which could take away sins" (Bruce).

(10:5-7) *"Therefore when He comes into the world, He says, 'SACRIFICE AND OFFERING THOU HAST NOT DESIRED, BUT A BODY THOU HAST PREPARED FOR ME.'"*

- The quotation is taken from the Septuagint (LXX) version of the Old Testament, which was a Greek translation made several centuries before the coming of Christ.

- In English versions of the OT, which are based on the Hebrew translation of the Masoretic scribes who lived between approximately 500-900 AD (The Masoretic text), Psalm 40:6b reads: "mine ears hast thou opened" (or more literally the Hebrew reads: "mine ears hast thou digged"; that is, formed in order to hear the words of God).

- The LXX translates the clause: "but a body thou hast prepared"; which speaks of the formation of Jesus' body in the womb of Mary.

- The sense of 10:5, therefore, speaks of the sacrifice and offering of the old covenant as something that God did not desire of His Son, but rather the living sacrifice of an obedient life.

- cf. Isaiah 50:4f. regarding the third Servant Song which also points to Christ.

- F.F. Bruce described the sense of this verse well: "Our author's contrast is not between sacrifice and obedience, but between the involuntary sacrifice of dumb animals and sacrifice into which obedience enters, the sacrifice of a rational and spiritual being, which is not passive in death, but in dying makes the will of God its own" (Bruce, p. 234.).

- *"IN WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN THOU HAST TAKEN NO PLEASURE."*

- Verses 5 and 6 identify four types of OT sacrifices which together describe all aspects of OT sacrificial provision: general sacrifices, meal offerings, sin offerings, burnt offerings.

- *"THEN I SAID, 'BEHOLD, I HAVE COME (IN THE ROLL OF THE BOOK IT IS WRITTEN OF ME) TO DO THY WILL, O GOD.'"*

- "Roll" is a scroll of the Torah, the Law of God. Jesus was born under the old covenant and lived a life fully obedient to all of its stipulations.

- This speaks of Christ' duty to do His Father's will but also of His desire to do so as well (whereas animals were ignorant or passive of their sacrifice, Jesus offered up His life willingly).

(10:8,9) *"After saying above, 'SACRIFICES AND OFFERINGS AND WHOLE BURNT OFFERINGS AND sacrifices FOR SIN THOU HAST NOT DESIRED, NOR HAST THOU TAKEN PLEASURE in them" (which are offered according to the Law), . . ."*

- The writer sees Psalm 40 as a prophecy of the end of the old covenant system of tabernacle sacrifice.

- *"then He said, "BEHOLD, I HAVE COME TO DO THY WILL."* He takes away the first in order to establish the second."

- The old covenant is removed by Christ's perfect obedience in order that the new covenant might be established.

(10:10) *"By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all."*

- The writer again mentions the last will and testament of Christ of which his people are beneficiaries due to His death. The offering of his body is the offering of Himself as is also the offering of His blood. (Whereas His body may speak of the offering of His life in living obedience, his blood may speak of the offering of His life in His death.

- The *"sanctification"* here is the once for all time setting apart of His people of all ages, a work which was accomplished at Calvary.

J. The Enthroned High Priest (10:11-18)

- Jesus as an enthroned king-priest is described as one who brings the new covenant blessings to His people.

(10:11) *"And every high priest stands daily ministering and offering time after time the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins;"*

- The ongoing futile activity of old covenant priests is described as a pitiful thing to consider, all that activity which accomplishes nothing.

- The Aaronic priests were always standing, always ministering, always sacrificing . . .

(10:12) *"but He, having offered one sacrifice for sins for all time, SAT DOWN AT THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD."*

- The writer again takes up Psalm 110 in which the king-priest Melchizedek was described.

- The enthronement of Christ occurred, He shares authority with God His Father; *"from the shame of the cross He has been exalted to the place of highest glory"* (**Bruce, p. 239**).

- His intercession continues on behalf of His people, but it is the application to individuals of His one time perfect sacrifice.

(10:13) *"waiting from that time onward UNTIL HIS ENEMIES BE MADE A FOOTSTOOL FOR HIS FEET."*

- Christ is ruling at the right hand of His Father. God has decreed that He would rule until He had subdued all opposition; they are conquered and brought under submission to God.

(10:14) *"For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are sanctified."*

- I don't know if we can fully realize the liberating impact this understanding must have had on first century Jewish Christians. They were no longer bound to offer animal sacrifices in a central location because the need was gone. They were now right with God.

- Again, the atonement of Christ is "limited" to His people, those "who are sanctified." In the same way that the sacrifice of a goat under the old economy had benefit only for Jews or Jewish proselytes, so the sacrifice of Christ has benefit only to those who belong to Him.

(10:15-18) *"And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us: for after saying, 'THIS IS THE COVENANT . . . ,' He then says, AND THEIR SINS AND THEIR LAWLESS DEEDS I WILL REMEMBER NO MORE."*

- Jeremiah 31:31ff. is again used by the writer (cf. Heb. 8:8ff.); OT passages are the Holy Spirit bearing witness to Christians.

- In chapter 9 the passage from Jeremiah was quoted in order to prove the passing of the old covenant, here it is quoted to prove the everlasting duration of the new covenant.

- For the one who has been "sanctified," assurance of an eternal, thus secure relationship is possible. Next, however, the writer stresses the importance of his readers to live a life consistent with their profession.

VI. Call to Worship, Faith and Perseverance (10:19-12:29)

- This is the last major section of argument of the epistle; the remaining section (13:1-21) involves parting injunctions.

A. Access to God through the Sacrifice of Christ (10:19-25)

- The writer now urges his readers to respond appropriately in the light of all there is in Christ by:

- 1) "Let us draw near (to God) with a sincere heart . . ."
- 2) "let us hold fast the confession of our hope . . ."
- 3) "let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,"

(10:19-21) *"Since, therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter . . ., and since we have a great high priest over the house of God . . ."*

- The word "therefore" indicates the writer will now present instruction which flows from what he has been teaching. All doctrine (teaching) has practical implications; furthermore, an understanding of doctrine brings accountability to the learner with regard to his/her response to the teaching.

- The word "since" (or, "because") indicates the reason for taking action. The writer gives two reasons for following his instruction: (1) since we have confidence to enter, and (2) since we have a high priest, it follows that we should . . .

- *"Since, therefore, brethren, we have confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus,"*

- He is speaking to "brethren"; those who profess to belong to the Lord Jesus and are numbered among the visible assembly of believers. The promises here are not for non-Christians; they have no access to God. The writer assumes that all of his readers belong to the Lord. Ultimately, however, it is not a (one-time)

profession of faith, but their perseverance in faith that will prove whether or not each of them truly belongs to Him (cf. Heb. 2:1-3a; 3:6,14; 10:35-39).

- We "*enter the holy place*," that is, heaven, in prayer and corporate worship. The means of our entry is "*by the blood of Christ*;" we have access through His blood, or through His sacrificial death on behalf of His people.

- Our "*confidence*" or assurance of being received is based on something outside of ourselves. It is not due to (or based upon) our holiness, or obedience, or sincerity, or even our faith, but rather it is due to Christ's blood (his sacrificial death). Nor is our confidence to approach God based on our perceptions of God's attributes of mercy, patience, or even His love. Our basis of access is through Christ's blood in which all the attributes of God have expression--His love, mercy, power, wisdom, holiness, righteousness, wrath, sense of justice, etc.

- "*by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh*,"

- similar idea to John 14:6

- "*new*" in the sense that it was inaugurated when Christ died and rose to enter heaven thereby providing an access to true life.

- It is a "*living way*" or a "*life-giving way*," or "*the way of life*."

- The "*veil*" is a metaphor of Christ's body which is taken from the tabernacle. The veil separated the holy place from the Holy of Holies, or perhaps better, the veil provided access to the presence of God. One side of the veil was in the presence of man while the other was in the presence of God. The writer saw Christ as the God-man prefigured by the veil.

- "*and since we have a great priest over the house of God*,"

- The "*house of God*" (or perhaps the household of God) which was Israel in the OT is the church of the NT (cf. 3:3-6).

- So, based on these two things, the writer encourages his readers to do three things:

- (1) "let us draw near" (10:22)
- (2) "let us hold fast" (10:23)
- (3) "let us consider how to . . ." (10:24)

(10:22-24) 1. "*Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith*"

- Christians are to draw near to God. All of life is to be lived out in the presence of God. "*Full assurance*" of God receiving us in His presence is available to those who are Christ's.

- "*having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water*."

- Whereas the Greek verb translated as "draw near" is a present tense verb thus signifying continuous action ("let us be ever drawing near"); the Greek verbs translated as "sprinkled" and "washed" are perfect tense verbs signifying a one time past occurrence which has abiding effects. There is but one occasion when a person has his/her evil conscience "sprinkled" and body "washed" but the results of that occasion has abiding significance in one's experience.

- We may ever draw near in full assurance of faith having at one time experienced the inward cleansing of sin (initial saving faith in Christ) and the outward sign of that cleansing (baptism). -cf. 1 Peter 3:21 (not in the NASV)

2. *"Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for He who promised is faithful."*

- Since we have confidence to enter the presence of God (10:19) and since we have a great priest interceding for us (10:21), let us persevere in our faith.

- The implication here is that there is only hope for those who maintain their faith. The writer will shortly state forthrightly what he implies here that there is no hope of salvation for an apostate (one who abandons faith in Christ).

- The reason for perseverance is given as being the faithfulness of God. God has promised salvation to the people for whom Christ died--those who believe on Him. The writer views salvation as a future prospect for the people of God, although they may have assurance they will receive it due to faith in Christ.

3. *"and let us consider how to stimulate one another to love and good deeds,"*

- The writer does not express directly why this is so important until verse 26. However, he has already indicated the importance of doing good works earlier in the epistle (6:9-12).

- Note that he is not saying specifically that "you love others and do good deeds" (although this is of course implied); rather, he is saying that you should be devising ways to get others to "love" and do "good deeds."

- *"not forsaking our own assembling together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another; and all the more, as you see the day drawing near."*

- It is not possible to be encouraging one another in the above ways if neglect of assembling occurs.

- *"The day"* is the approaching day of judgment at the second coming of Christ when all will stand before the Lord and give an account of themselves.

V. He proves the equity of his proceedings with all, when he shall actually come to Judge them ([v. 12-16](#)), upon this principle, that that which is the rule of man's obedience is the rule of God's judgment.

Three degrees of light are revealed to the children of men:—1. The light of nature. This the Gentiles have, and by this they shall be judged: *As many as have sinned without law shall perish without law*; that is, the unbelieving Gentiles, who had no other guide but natural conscience, no other motive but common mercies, and had not the law of Moses nor any supernatural revelation, shall not be reckoned with for the transgression of the law they never had, nor come under the aggravation of the Jews' sin against and judgment by the written law; but they shall be judged by, as they sin against, the law of nature, not only as it is in their hearts, corrupted, defaced, and imprisoned in unrighteousness, but as in the uncorrupt original the Judge keeps by him. Further to clear this ([v. 14](#), [v. 15](#)), in a parenthesis, he evinces that the light of nature was to the Gentiles instead of a written law. He had said ([v. 12](#)) they had *sinned without law*, which looks like a contradiction; for where there is no law there is no transgression. But, says he, though they had not the written law ([Ps. 147:20](#)), they had that which was equivalent, not to the ceremonial, but to the moral law. They *had the work of the law*. He does not mean that work which the law commands, as if they could

produce a perfect obedience; but that work which the law does. The work of the law is to direct us what to do, and to examine us what we have done. Now,

(1.) They had that which directed them what to do by the light of nature: by the force and tendency of their natural notions and dictates they apprehended a clear and vast difference between good and evil. They *did by nature the things contained in the law*. They had a sense of justice and equity, honour and purity, love and charity; the light of nature taught obedience to parents, pity to the miserable, conservation of public peace and order, forbade murder, stealing, lying, perjury, etc. Thus they were a *law unto themselves*.

(2.) They had that which examined them as to what they had done: *Their conscience also bearing witness*. They had that within them which approved and commended what was well done and which reproached them for what was done amiss. Conscience is a witness, and first or last will bear witness, though for a time it may be bribed or brow-beaten. It is instead of a thousand witnesses, testifying of that which is most secret; and their *thoughts accusing or excusing*, passing a judgment upon the testimony of conscience by applying the law to the fact. Conscience is that candle of the Lord which was not quite put out, no, not in the Gentile world. The heathen have witnessed to the comfort of a good conscience.—*Hic murus ahoncus esto, Nil conscire sibi—parBe this thy brazen bulwark of defence, Still to preserve thy conscious innocence.—Hos, and to the terror of a bad one:—Quos diri consein facti Mens habet attonitos, et surdo verbere cuodi—parNo lash is heard, and yet the guilty heartIs tortur'd with a self-inflicted smar—uv. Sat. 13.* Their *thoughts the meanwhile, metaxy allelon —among themselves*, or one with another. The same light and law of nature that witnesses against sin in them, and witnessed against it in others, accused or excused one another. *Vicissim*, so some read it, *by turns*; according as they observed or broke these natural laws and dictates, their consciences did either acquit or condemn them. All this did evince that they had that which was to them instead of a law, which they might have been governed by, and which will condemn them, because they were not so guided and governed by it. So that the guilty Gentiles are left without excuse. God is justified in condemning them. They cannot plead ignorance, and therefore are likely to perish if they have not something else to plead.

2. The light of the law. This the Jews had, and by this they shall be judged ([v. 12](#)): *As many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law*. They sinned, not only having the law, but *en nomo—in the law*, in the midst of so much law, in the face and light of so pure and clear a law, the directions of which were so very full and particular, and the sanctions of it so very cogent and enforcing. These shall be judged *by the law*; their punishment shall be, as their sin is, so much the greater for their having the law. *The Jew first, v. 9*. It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon. Thus Moses did accuse them ([Jn. 5:45](#)), and they fell under the many stripes of him that knew his master's will, and did it not, [Lu. 12:47](#). The Jews prided themselves very much in the law; but, to confirm what he had said, the apostle shows ([v. 13](#)) that their having, and hearing, and knowing the law, would not justify them, but their doing it. The Jewish doctors bolstered up their followers with an opinion that all that were Jews, how bad soever they lived, should have a place in the world to come. This the apostle here opposes: it was a great privilege that they had the law, but not a saving privilege, unless they lived up to the law they had, which it is certain the Jews did not, and therefore they had need of a righteousness wherein to appear before God. We may apply it to the gospel: it is not hearing, but doing that will save us, [Jn. 13:17](#); [James. 1:22](#).

3. The light of the gospel: and according to this those that enjoyed the gospel shall be judge ([v. 16](#)): *According to my gospel*; not meant of any fifth gospel written by Paul, as some conceit; or of the gospel written by *Luke*, as Paul's amanuensis (*Euseb. Hist. lib 3, cap. 8*), but the gospel in general, called Paul's because he was a preacher of it. As many as are under that dispensation shall be judged according to that dispensation, [Mk. 16:16](#). Some refer those words, *according to my gospel*, to what he says of the day of judgment: "There will come a day of judgment, according as I have in my preaching often told you; and that will be the day of the final judgment both of Jews and Gentiles." It is good for us to get acquainted with what is revealed concerning that day.

(1.) There is a day set for a general judgment. The day, the great day, his day that is coming, [Ps. 37:13](#).

(2.) The judgment of that day will be put into the hands of Jesus Christ. God shall judge by Jesus Christ, [Acts. 17:31](#) . It will be part of the reward of his humiliation. Nothing speaks more terror to sinners, or more comfort to saints, than this, that Christ shall be the Judge.

(3.) The secrets of men shall then be judged. Secret services shall be then rewarded, secret sins shall be then punished, hidden things shall be brought to light. That will be the great discovering day, when that which is now done in corners shall be proclaimed to all the world.

John Gill

Ver. 12. For as many as have sinned without law, etc..] This is an instance of the strict justice of God, and proves him to be no respecter of persons; for the Gentiles, who were “without law”, the written law of Moses, not without the law of nature in their breasts, nor without some civil laws and statutes of their own; inasmuch as they “sinned” against the God of nature, and the law and light of nature, they shall also perish without law: not that their condemnation and perdition will be illegal, or not in due course of law; but it will not proceed upon, or according to the law of Moses, they never had; and much less for not believing in Christ, of whom they never heard; but their perdition will be for their sins committed without the law of Moses, against the law of nature: their not having the written law of Moses will be no plea in their favour, or be a reason why they should not be condemned; their persons will not be regarded as with or without the law, but their sins committed by them, to which facts their consciences will bear witness: and, so on the other hand, as many as have sinned in the law; who have been in and under the law of Moses, and have sinned against it, meaning the Jews: shall be judged by the law; and condemned by it, as they were in this world, and will be hereafter: their having this law will be no bar against their condemnation, but rather an aggravation of it; their hearing of it will be no plea in their favour; nor their doing of it neither, unless they could have done it to perfection; for perfect obedience it requires, as a justifying righteousness, otherwise it curses, condemns, and adjudges to death.

Ver. 13. For not the hearers of the law are just before God, etc..] The apostle here shows, that the Jews were justly condemned, notwithstanding their having and hearing of the law; since hearing without doing it, will never denominate persons righteous in the sight of God, however it might recommend them in the sight of men: regard seems to be had either to the first delivery of the law by Moses to the people of Israel, when he read it to them, and they hearkened to it, and promised obedience; or rather to the reading and hearing it every sabbath day; and may include a speculative knowledge of it, without a practical obedience to it; and which therefore must fall greatly short of entitling them to a justifying righteousness; since not these, but the doers of the law, shall be justified; by whom are meant, not such who merely literally and externally fulfil the law, as they imagine; for the law is spiritual, and regards the inward as well as the outward man, and requires internal holiness, as well as external obedience; and the apostle is speaking of justification before God, who sees the heart, and not before men, who judge according to outward appearance: nor are such designed who are imperfect doers of the law; for the law requires a perfect obedience, and what is not perfect is not properly righteousness; nor does it, nor can it consider an imperfect righteousness as a perfect one; for it accuses of, pronounces guilty, curses, and condemns for every transgression of it. But such only can be intended, who are doers of it spiritually, internally, as well as externally, and that perfectly. Adam, in his state of innocence, was a perfect doer of the law; he sinning, and all his posterity in him, none of them are righteous, but all pass under a sentence of condemnation. The best of men, even believers in Christ, are not without sin in themselves; and when any of the saints are said to be perfect, it must be understood in a comparative sense, or as they are considered in Christ. There never was but one since Adam, and that is Christ, who has fulfilled, or could perfectly fulfil the law; the thing is impossible and impracticable for fallen man: hence these words must be understood either hypothetically, thus, not the hearers of the law, but if there were any perfect doers of it, they would be justified before God; or else of such persons who are considered

in Christ, by whom the whole perfect righteousness of the law is fulfilled in them, and who may be reckoned as perfect doers of it in him, their substitute, surety, and representative.

Ver. 14. For when the Gentiles which have not the law, etc..] The objection of the Gentiles against their condemnation, taken from their being without the law, is here obviated. The apostle owns that they had not the law, that is, the written law of Moses, and yet intimates that they had, and must have a law, against which they sinned, and so deserved punishment, and which they in part obeyed; for these men do by nature the things contained in the law. The matter and substance of the moral law of Moses agrees with the law and light of nature; and the Gentiles in some measure, and in some sort, did these things by nature; not that men by the mere strength of nature without the grace of God, can fulfil the law, or do anything that is acceptable to God; and indeed, what these men did was merely natural and carnal, and so unacceptable to God. Some understand this of nature assisted by grace, in converted Gentiles, whether before or after the coming of Christ; others expound the phrase, by nature, freely, willingly, in opposition to the servile spirit of the Jews, in their obedience to the law; though it rather seems to design the dictates of natural reason, by which they acted: and so these having not the law, the written law, are a law to themselves; which they have by nature and use, and which natural reason dictates to them. So Plato distinguishes the law “into written and un written the written law is that which was used in commonwealths; and that kata eyh ginomenov, “which was according to custom or nature”, was called unwritten, such as not to go to market naked, nor to be clothed with women's clothes; which things were not forbidden by any law, but these were not done because forbidden by the unwritten law;” which he calls “unwritten”, because not written on tables, or with ink; otherwise it was written in their minds, and which by nature and use they were accustomed to.

Ver. 15. Which show the work of the law written in their hearts, etc..] Though the Gentiles had not the law in form, written on tables, or in a book, yet they had “the work”, the matter, the sum and substance of it in their minds; as appears by the practices of many of them, in their external conversation. The moral law, in its purity and perfection, was written on the heart of Adam in his first creation; was sadly obliterated by his sin and fall; upon several accounts, and to answer various purposes, a system of laws was written on tables of stone for the use of the Israelites; and in regeneration the law is reinscribed on the hearts of God's people; and even among the Gentiles, and in their hearts, there are some remains of the old law and light of nature, which as by their outward conduct appears, so by the inward motions of their minds, their conscience also bearing witness; for, as the Jews say b hdy[m ūda lç wtmçn, “the soul of a man witnesses in him”; for, or against him: and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another; and this the Heathens themselves acknowledge, when they speak of “tameion dikasthron kai krithrion thv suneidhsewv, “the conclave, tribunal and judgment of conscience”; and which they call dikasthn dikaiotaton, “the most righteous judge”: whose judgment reason receives, and gives its suffrage to, whether worthy of approbation or reproof; when it reads in the memory as if written on a table the things that are done, and then beholding the law as an exemplar, pronounces itself either worthy of honour or dishonour.”

Ver. 16. In the day when God shall judge, etc..] These words are to be read in connection with (Romans 2:13), and express the time when both Jews and Gentiles will be judged, called a “day”, both because of the clearness and evidence of the judgment that will be made, and because a certain time is fixed, though not known, which will surely come; also the matter of the judgment, which will be, the secrets of men: whether good or bad, which are only known to God and themselves, and which may have been done ignorantly by them; “for God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil”, (Ecclesiastes 12:14), which is so interpreted by the Jews “when R. Jochanan came to that Scripture, he wept; “for God shall bring every work into judgment with every secret thing;” upon which the gloss says, yea, for those things which are hidden from him, which he has committed through ignorance, will he bring him into judgment; everything, even the least thing in a literal sense, but not for such silly trifling things they mention in the same place; doubtless the Holy Ghost means the secrets of men's hearts and actions, and the hidden things of darkness which are contrary to the holy law of God. The person by whom this awful judgment will be carried on is, Jesus Christ; to whom all judgment is committed, who is ordained Judge of quick and dead, and is every way fit for that office, being God as well as man, and so both

omniscient and omnipotent: and this the apostle says will be, according to my Gospel; his meaning is not that the Gospel will be the, rule of judgment, because he speaking of the judgment of the Gentiles, as well as of the Jews, who never heard of the Gospel; but that what he had said concerning a day of judgment, of Christ's being the Judge, and of God's judging by him the secrets of men, were as true and as certain as the Gospel which he preached was; and was "conformable", or agreeable to it, as the Arabic version reads it, and might be learned and proved from it. This he calls, "my Gospel"; not because the author or subject of it; but because it was committed to his trust and was preached by him; and in opposition to, and to distinguish it from the Gospel of the false apostles. Eusebius says that the Apostle Paul had used to call the Gospel according to Luke his Gospel, and that it is said, that whenever he makes mention of his Gospel, he designs that.