

***Pastor Jeremy M. Thomas***  
***Fredericksburg Bible Church***

*107 East Austin*

*Fredericksburg, Texas 78624*

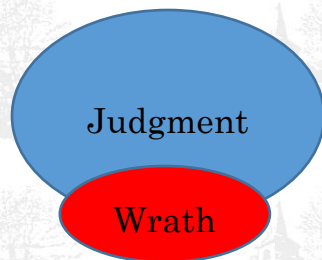
*830-997-8834    [jthomas@fbgbible.org](mailto:jthomas@fbgbible.org)*

**A1429 – July 20, 2014 – Romans 2:12-16**  
**The Judgment Of God**

We're in Paul's first major section of Romans; condemnation. Romans 1:18-32 sketches the condemnation of pagan Gentiles; Romans 2:1-16 the condemnation of moral Gentiles and Jews and Rom 2:17-3:8 sketches the condemnation of Jews. People stand condemned on a number of counts, Scofield mentioned eight, and they remain under these condemnations until they place their faith in Christ. We're studying the condemnation in Romans 2:1-16 which deals with condemnation of Jews and Gentiles for violation of the Law and conscience. But what's the big idea behind these condemnations? That God will judge. And what's the significance of that for your worldview? It means evil will not go on forever. God is going to solve the problem of evil. So we can be thankful that even though men think they are getting away with murder, deceit, hate, malice and every other kind of depravity under the sun, they are not. God will solve the problem of evil but right now He is being patient allowing men an opportunity to repent. Now what is storing up in the meantime? A basis of judgment is forming in their own conscience that can never be erased. Everyone is made in the image of God including unbelievers, even though it is married and yet they have a conscience and their conscience passes judgment on those who do evil things while they practice the same things. When they do this their conscience, like a tape recorder, keeps a permanent record of it. Over time the database of these records gets pretty large and on the day of God's judgment that database will be there as a basis of condemnation.

When? There are two days in view in 2:5-16. There is the day of wrath and the day of judgment. I'm distinguishing those two days. The way I'm distinguishing them is I'm saying that the day of wrath is God's temporal punishment and the day of judgment includes that day but also includes God's eternal punishment. Now I was tipped off to this distinction by Rene

Lopez in his commentary on Romans and I was very skeptical of that distinction until I looked up every usage of “wrath” in the NT and found that of the 36 uses they all referred to temporal punishment whereas the 115 uses of judgment referred either to temporal punishment or eternal punishment. Then I was convinced. And even Romans 2:5 shows that the day of wrath is also a day of the revelation of the judgment of God but no passage equates all judgment with the wrath of God. So the relationship between wrath and judgment looks like this; all wrath is judgment but not all judgment is wrath. It’s like the gifts of pastor and teacher; all pastors are teachers but not all teachers are pastors.



Having made this distinction, Romans 2:5-11 is declaring God’s wrath in the judgment phase of the day of the LORD, that’s a temporal judgment; and the verses we will deal with today in Romans 2:12-16 are declaring God’s judgment at the Great White Throne, that’s an eternal judgment. These two judgment are separated by over a thousand years. Eschatology is a picture that you have to put together by systematizing all the information in Scripture. The basic picture of eschatology comes out of the Abrahamic and Davidic covenants but I’ll reserve my comments to the Book of Daniel because of it’s extensive chronology. It was revealed to Daniel that when the nation Israel went into exile to Babylon that they would remain under the dominion of four successive Gentile kingdoms, the fourth having two phases, before they would be restored to world supremacy in the fifth Jewish kingdom ruled by the Son of Man. Jesus referred to this period of Gentile supremacy as “the times of the Gentiles.” The first kingdom was the Babylonians, then sequentially came the Medo-Persians, then the Greeks and then the first phase of Rome. The first phase of Rome is historic from our day, it’s already run its course but the future phase of Rome is coming together as we speak. In the meantime we have the Church and when the fullness of the Gentiles comes in then the Church will be taken out of the world and the judgment phase of the day of the LORD’s wrath will come upon that future

phase of Rome. It's that wrath of God's judgment that is being described in 2:5-11. After it has run its course the fifth kingdom ruled by the Son of Man will come. Revelation 20 tells us seven times that this kingdom will last for precisely 1,000 years, during which righteousness, peace and justice will fill the earth. After the thousand years Satan will be released and the nations will turn against God who will destroy them decisively. At that point all unbelievers from all time will stand at the Great White Throne judgment.

It's the Great White Throne judgment that is the subject of our passage today in Romans 2:12-16. If you scan the verses you see there is no wrath in these verses. The Great White Throne is not about God dishing out wrath. It is about God's judgment through Christ that assigns people to their final destiny in the lake of fire. Turn to Rev 20:11-15. "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat upon it," Jesus Christ is sitting on it. All judgment has been given to the Son, so it's the Father judging through the Son. So here's the Son and "from whose presence earth and heaven fled away, and no place was found for them." That's the dissolution of the first phase of the new heaven and new earth. Verse 12, "And I saw the dead, the great and the small, standing before the throne, and books were opened;" notice multiple books, volumes of books and then also "another book was opened, which is *the book of life*;" one book, "and the dead were judged from the things which were written in the books, according to their deeds." So the multiple books contain the deeds of the dead and it's on the basis of those deeds that they are judged. All judgment is based on deeds. Verse 13, "And the sea gave up the dead which were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead which were in them; and they were judged, every one *of them* according to their deeds. <sup>14</sup>Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. This is the second death, the lake of fire." Now I don't think you want to go there. The lake of fire was created for the devil and his angels but unbelievers end up there. What the lake of fire is is defined here as the second death. Death meaning separation; second because the first is physical death, separation of the body and spirit, but here the second death is even worse because it's separation from a relationship with God. The worst part of the lake of fire is separation from a relationship with God. And so the people are being assigned to some degree of punishment in the lake of fire and the degree of punishment is based on their deeds. God is just. Verse 15 brings us back to the other book that was opened at this judgment, the book of life, and it shows the basis for them being cast in the lake of fire. "And if anyone's name was not found written in the book of

life, he was thrown into the lake of fire.” So one’s eternal destiny in the lake of fire is based solely on whether their name is found written in the book of life, which is determined on the basis of whether someone believes the gospel or not; but the degree of punishment they face in the lake of fire is based solely on their deeds. So if they don’t believe they will be at this judgment and they will be judged on their deeds and assigned some degree of punishment in the lake of fire. That’s the basic picture of the end of all humans who spurned the grace of God provided for them in the substitutionary blood atonement of Jesus Christ.

Now if we come back to Romans 2:12-16 Paul is referring to that day, as Paul refers to it in verse 16 as the day when, according to my gospel,” that would be the book of life, if someone’s name is not in the book of life they have not believed the gospel and they will be at the Great White Throne judgment. And on that day what will God do? **Judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.** Jesus is the One who will sit on the great white throne and through Him God will judge their thoughts, their secrets, their hidden things. People are deep caverns of secrets but there is a God who has access to those deep caverns. That’s not supposed to be a comforting thought if you’re not right with God. Your secrets are going to be judged by the perfect God of justice. What do you deserve? Really. Being honest with yourself, what do you deserve? Verse 32 said that the men who did those things know that they deserve death. You’re fooling no one. You are not a good person. There is none good but God. Get real. Wake up and face reality. All your secrets are on record in your conscience and your conscience is going to bear testimony on that day that you are without excuse. You knew what others were doing was wrong and you condemned them for it, yet you did those very things.

Notice verse 12 shows this, **For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law.** Is the Jew or Gentile in view? Those **without the Law** are Gentile. Gentiles were not given the Law at Mt Sinai. Jews were given the Law. They’re the only nation that had the privilege of God writing their constitution. And God held them accountable to it. No Gentile nation had their constitution written by God. So it is Gentiles who are **without the Law.** Yet were they culpable even **without the Law?** Absolutely. They’re going to perish anyway. Then who’s in view in the rest of the verse? **And all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law.** Jew or Gentile? Who are those **under the Law?** Jews. The nation

Israel is the only nation that were placed under the Law given at Mt Sinai as a rule of life.

So there are obviously differences between Jews and Gentiles but there are also similarities. Let's look at the differences first. They're less important but still important. What's one difference between Jew and Gentile? Jews are under the Law; Gentiles are not under the Law. We already stated that difference. Any other difference? You can't see it in the English very well but you can in the Greek. The Jews are going to **be judged by the Law**. The verb **will be judged** is passive voice meaning that the standard by which they **will be judged** is external to themselves. And what is that standard? **The Law**. They had **the Law** and they did not live according to **the Law** and therefore on the basis of **the Law** they are condemned. Yet does Paul say Gentiles will be judged by the Law? No. They didn't have the Law. Instead he says they **will perish** but he doesn't tell us yet on what basis they will perish. But he does hint at it because the verb **will perish** is middle voice meaning that the Gentiles destroy themselves, that is, they are the cause of their own destruction. So it's not the Law which is something external, but it's something internal to their own persons. We're not told what it is within them that destroys them but if we're remembering verse 1 and we're looking ahead to verse 15 we know it's their conscience. Their conscience is going to wipe them out in the day of judgment. And it's the same verb perish that is used in John 3:16 in the same voice. John 3:16 does not say that God will perish those who do not believe. It says they will perish themselves. So the cause for Gentile condemnation is themselves; their own conscience. Those are the two differences. Jews under Law; Gentiles not under Law; Jews judged by Law; Gentiles judged by conscience. What are the similarities? Both Jew and Gentile **sinned**. Whether with the Law or without the Law both groups **sinned**. The Greek word is *αμαρτανω*, commonly described as "missing the mark." In archery to hit the bulls eye is to hit the mark. To hit anything other than the bulls eye is to sin. But the real picture of this word is that you were aiming the opposite direction. You don't even get close to the bulls eye. So they both sinned, that's one similarity. What other similarities? Both are judged. Whether by Law or by conscience, both are judged. That should go without saying according to verse 11. There is no partiality with God.

Verse 13 is an explanation for why Jews who were under Law were condemned by the Law and this section will be expanded in verse 17ff. **For it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.** Now, again, like the verses last week, it sounds like a Jew could be justified by works, apart from faith. All he has to do is keep **the Law; the doers of the Law will be justified.** Does anyone disagree that the verse says that if you do the Law you'll be justified? Just so we're clear, what does Paul mean by justified here? He means that after the process of doing the Law all your life and you stand before God and he looks at your works He will declare you righteous.

Yet what do we know from Galatians and elsewhere? Turn over to Gal 2:16. Galatians and Romans are very similar in their themes. They are both concerned with the gospel. And what does Gal 2:16 do to the concept that one could be justified by doing the Law? It shatters it. "nevertheless knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified." Can anybody be justified by doing the Law? No. Justification is only through what? Faith in Jesus Christ. Justification isn't something declared after you've done a life of perfection. Justification is a legal declaration of righteousness because of our faith in the One who is perfectly righteous, Jesus Christ. So it means credited as righteousness. The individual remains a sinner. That's why Luther who restored this doctrine to the Church and had such a fine grasp of this doctrine from the Book of Romans stated the Latin *simul iustus et peccatore*, at the same time just and a sinner. His point was to emphasize that justification was a legal declaration only. It was not something you became, it was something that was proclaimed of you.

So back in Romans 2:13 what is Paul positing? Something impossible. Yes, theoretically if a Jew could do the Law perfectly He would be **justified before God** but it's not possible. Now why does Paul have to say **it is not the hearers of the Law who are justified before God?** Surely that is obvious. Yet it was not so obvious to Jews since it was a common belief among the Jews that if they went to synagogue and heard the Law that it worked toward their justification before God. So then Paul has to address it. You find the same problem among Jewish Christians in the book of James. They were hearers of the word but not what? Doers. Jews laid a lot of weight on hearing

the word. They thought it gained merit before God. It did nothing of the sort and that is why Paul is making the point. Gentile Christian's do it too. They think by listening to doctrine they are getting brownie points with God. Nonsense. It may help you live a better life, if you put it to work, but it's not getting you brownie points with God. And so putting all of verse 13 together, if they were to hear the Law and that was not sufficient then certainly if they were to do the Law then they would be justified before God, and yet no one ever was; for no man is justified by the works of the Law but only through faith in Christ Jesus. It's not about baptism, it's not about confessing your sins, it's not about turning from your sins, reforming your life, praying the sinners prayer or any of the other 99 things people tell you you must do to be saved, it's about one thing only and that thing must be alone, it can't be this thing plus one of the other things in the list, it's this alone, faith in Jesus Christ.

Alright, so if verse 13 explains that Jews are condemned on the basis of Law then verse 14-16 are explaining why Gentiles are condemned without the Law. Verse 14, **For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the law, are a law to themselves.** They do things that reflect **the Law** that God gave at Mt Sinai, it is part of their nature to live according to revealed law even though they weren't given it directly and are not under it as a rule of life. And so when they do the things of the Law, though they do not have the law, they are a law to themselves. He's talking, of course, about the conscience, their conscience is kicking in and telling them, "That's right, that's wrong." But how do they know what's right and what's wrong if they don't have the Law? Verse 15 explains, **in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts.** There is **work** that the Law does in the sense of influence. There are several lines of evidence. First, all men have been influenced by the truths of the Noahic Bible in Gen 1-9. The Jews today refer to seven laws from the Noahic Bible as the Noahide Laws or the Seven Laws of Noah. They claim that all Gentiles have been influenced by these Laws and are obligated to follow these laws because this revelation came to them through one of the sons of Noah; Shem, Ham or Japheth. The first law is the prohibition of idolatry, the second murder, the third theft, the fourth sexual immorality, the fifth blasphemy, the sixth eating an animal while alive and seventh, legal recourse. Those seven laws have influenced all men, that is the work of the Law revealed in Gen 1-9 which causes moral Gentiles to do instinctively the

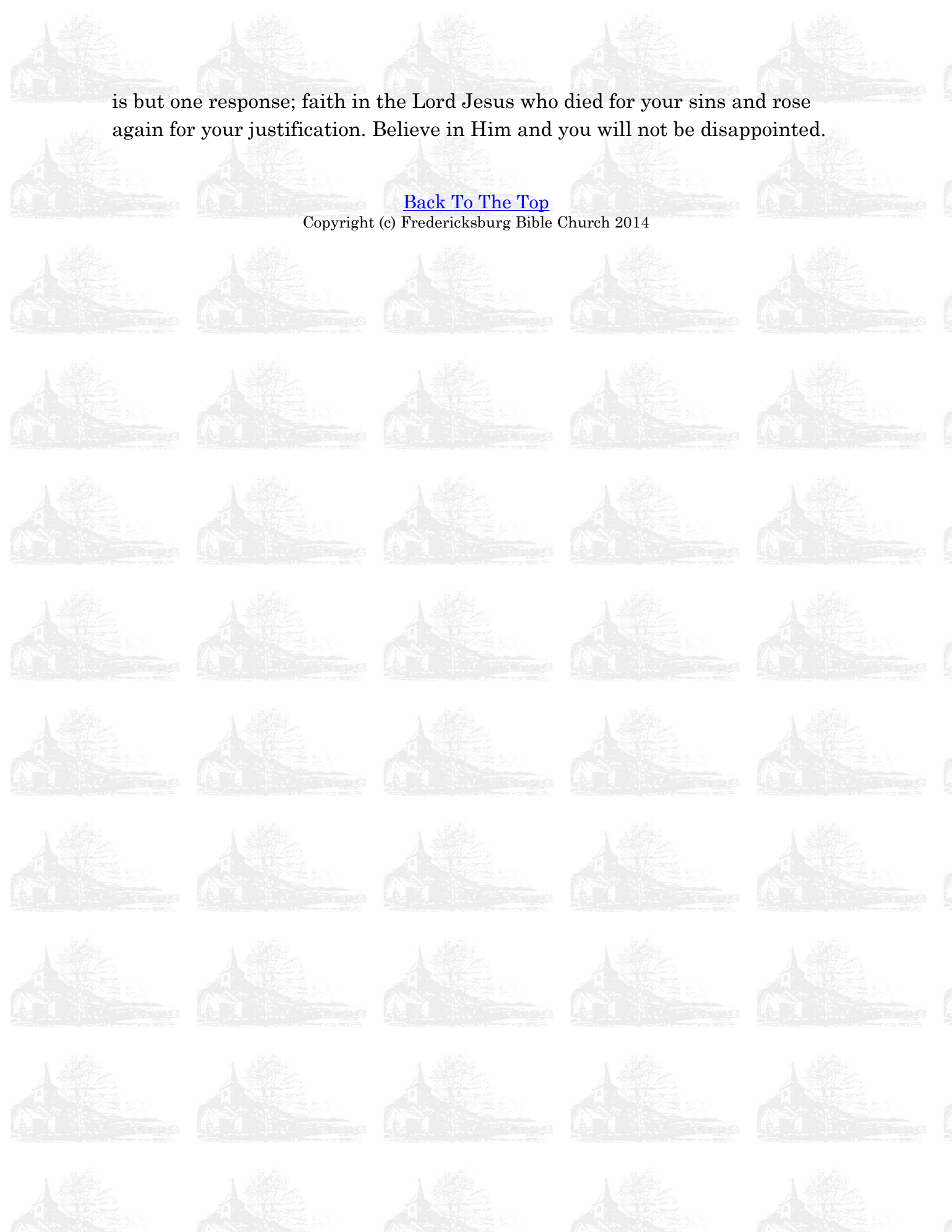
things of the things of the Law. Second, many Gentiles were influenced by the truths of the Law in the time of King David and Solomon. During their reigns the kingdom of Israel led to a golden era which attracted wealthy rulers, businessmen and seafarers from around the world. The queen of Sheba is one such example. She was likely Hatshepsut and the ruler of Egypt at the time. She came because of all that she had heard and when she listened to the wisdom of Solomon she declared it was not told her the half of it. These truths traveled with her back to Egypt as archaeology attests to monotheism and temples designed after the temple at Jerusalem. And she is just one of many that are attested as being influenced by the Law of Israel in that time. Third, at the Exile the Babylonians and Greeks and Romans were influenced by the Laws of the Hebrew Bible. When Jews like Daniel, Esther and Nehemiah lived in these pagan empires they brought the truths of the Hebrew Law to bear on those empires by adhering to their truths. In Daniel's day government declarations were made about the importance of worshipping Daniel's God. In Ezra's day steps were made by the Persian king to adorn the Temple in Jerusalem and restore proper worship. The influence of the Hebrew Law was quite extensive in these Gentile kingdoms, indelibly making its mark on the Gentile conscience. Fourth, after the time of Alexander the Great, at Alexandria, Egypt, the Hebrew Bible was translated into Greek. This version, known as the LXX is the most commonly quoted version of the Bible in the NT. With the Hebrew Bible translated into Greek it made it's influence on Gentiles who could now read it in their own tongue. Fifth, the NT has, of course, had an influence on Gentiles. When the Jews rejected Jesus as the Messiah and the believing remnant formed the Church the gospel quickly went out to Gentiles and by the end of the first century the Church was predominantly Gentile. It has remained predominantly Gentile. Sixth, at the time of the Reformation the influence of the Hebrew Bible resurfaced and virtually shaped all of western culture. The Reformation was primarily in the north of Europe, whereas the humanistic Renaissance occurred in the south of Europe. The difference was a theocentric view of history centering on revelation vs a anthropocentric view of history centering on human reason. The United States of America was settled primarily by those in the north of Europe affected by the Reformation. Our form of law, economics, etc...was all reflective, in large part, of Hebrew thought, though we have strayed from that once great ideal. The Hebrew Scriptures have left their influence wherever they have gone. And conversely, when the Hebrew Scriptures have not gone their influence has not been felt nearly as deeply.



Yet it is that influence that Paul is referring to when he says in verse 14 that men not having the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, verse 15, in that they show the work or influence of the Law written on their hearts. The Hebrew Law has given shape to their thinking and their conscience is judging according to their thinking. God has not left Himself without more than adequate witness.

Yet in the middle of verse 15, even moral Gentiles have not lived up to their conscience. Paul says, **their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them.** They know what is wrong because the Scriptures influence is felt and yet they do the very things they know are wrong. Consequently when they stand at the Great White Throne judgment their conscience, like a tape recorder, will be brought up and the moments when their conscience was condemning them, those parts of the tape will be played as a **witness** and they will have no excuse.

Verse 16, **on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.** **On the day** refers to the day of the Great White Throne, which passage is most clearly laid out for us in Rev 20:11-15. In that passage we saw that the book of life was brought up and if anyone's name was not found in the book of life then that man was thrown into the lake of fire. The book of life contains the names of all who have believed the gospel of Jesus Christ. The gospel is that Jesus Christ, the Son of God, died for our sins and was raised for our justification. If anyone believes in Him he will not perish himself but have everlasting life. It only requires faith. Salvation is a gift of God. But for those who do not believe they will stand at the Great White Throne judgment and **according** to Paul's **gospel**, which is the gospel for there is no other gospel, they will be assigned to the lake of fire, the degree of punishment there will be determined by the evaluation of men's **secrets**. Again, men have secrets, deep, dark secrets, things that they think are hidden so deep that nobody knows, things that they think they have gotten away with and yet they have not gotten away with them. God will judge the secrets through Christ Jesus. Christ Jesus is the judge. All judgment, He says, has been given to me by the Father. And on that day those secrets will be revealed and they will be judged accordingly. There is none righteous, no not one, neither Jew nor Greek, whether under Law or without Law, all are sinners and fall short of the glory of God. There



is but one response; faith in the Lord Jesus who died for your sins and rose again for your justification. Believe in Him and you will not be disappointed.

[Back To The Top](#)

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