

Daily Bread with Brother Hwa-Chi (Not reviewed by the speaker, for personal use only)

Romans 2: 16

Brothers and sisters, peace be with you, this is Hwa-Chi. Thank the Lord, it's time to read the bible again. Today, we will continue reading Romans chapter 2, verse 16.

Yesterday, we said that verses 13 to 15 are a parenthetical insertion to explain verse 12. Today's verse 16 logically follows verse 12. Verse 12 states: "For as many as have sinned without law will also perish without law, and as many as have sinned in the law will be judged by the law." This refers to the Jews, who received God's law through Moses and will be judged according to it.

The law is the measure of their daily lives, and crossing its boundaries results in judgment by the law. This is straightforward and obvious, requiring little explanation. However, Gentiles, who did not receive a written law, are told in verse 12 that those who sin without the law will also perish without the law. Of course, before perishing, they must be condemned, but how are they judged? Yesterday's passage explained clearly that they are judged according to their conscience.

The function of the conscience is very similar to that of the law, both bearing witness to God's nature. The difference is that the law regulates people externally, while the conscience's function is written in their hearts, guiding them internally. The Jews' behavior is externally regulated by the law, and any violation of God's law today results in judgment by the law. Gentiles, without God's law, are judged by their conscience. How are they judged by their conscience? This raises a series of questions: Who judges? When is the judgment? How is it carried out? Paul answers these in verse 16.

Verse 16: "in the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel."

From this verse, we clearly see that the judge is Jesus Christ. During his second missionary journey in Athens, while preaching the gospel to the Athenians, Paul said, as recorded in Acts 17:31: “because He has appointed a day on which He will judge the world in righteousness by the Man whom He has ordained. He has given assurance of this to all by raising Him from the dead.” God has appointed Jesus Christ as the judge, who will judge the world in righteousness; Jesus’ resurrection from the dead is the proof.

Hebrews 4:15 says: “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.” Jesus lived a perfect human life on earth, tempted in every way as we are, yet without sin. This qualifies Him to atone for humanity’s sins and to judge all people.

Moreover, God raised Him from the dead, overcoming the dominion of sin and death. This proves His perfect righteousness and grants Him the authority to judge the world in righteousness. The objects of judgment are Gentiles without the law, and the evidence is each Gentile’s secret deeds. We should not think that our secret deeds are unknown; this is self-deception.

Hebrews 4:13 states: “And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.” Since all things were created through Christ, they are naked and open before Him. Every secret deed done by people will be fully exposed before the judging Lord. These secret deeds are public evidence, proving that people violated their conscience’s function, which is their sin, and they must pay the price for it. Paying the price for sin results in two categories of Gentiles and two different judgment days appointed for them.

The first category is Gentiles who believe in Jesus Christ and are saved. They become Christians, and the price for their sins has been paid by Jesus. His blood shed on the cross paid their sin debt, making them righteous in God’s sight. The second category is unbelieving Gentiles; because they do not believe, their sins remain, and they must pay the price for their sins themselves. For these two groups, God has appointed two different judgment days.

The first judgment day comes earlier, for saved Gentile saints, as God's judgment begins with His household. This judgment is set for Jesus Christ's return. According to 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17: "For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus, we shall always be with the Lord." At Jesus' descent, at the seventh trumpet, deceased saints will rise first, followed by living saints, who will be raptured to meet the Lord in the air, then come before the judgment seat of Christ. 2 Corinthians 5:10 says: "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad."

Here, we see that every saved saint must appear before Christ's judgment seat, where their post-salvation life and actions will be revealed, with no secrets remaining. The judgment at Christ's seat is straightforward.

1 Corinthians 3:13-15 states: "each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire."

Here, we see that Christ will judge each saint's lifelong work with fire. After salvation, a saint's daily life and actions are like building a work. If they build with gold, silver, and precious stones, their work endures, and they receive a reward. If their life consists of wood, hay, and straw, these works will be burned completely, leaving nothing. They will suffer loss, yet be saved, though as through fire, with little glory. This applies to Gentile saints who believe in Jesus Christ.

For unbelieving Gentiles, God's appointed judgment day is after the millennial kingdom, at the end of time, when God clears the old creation to prepare for the eternal future. Revelation 20:11-15 says: "Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away. And there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God,

and books were opened. And another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books. The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works. Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.”

Here, we see that after the millennial kingdom, Christ will sit on the great white throne, judging all the dead; the sea, Death, and Hades will give up their dead. In Christ’s hand, a book will be opened, recording each person’s secret deeds, and all will be judged according to their works. Another book, the Book of Life, will be opened, and those whose names are not in it will be cast into the lake of fire, suffering day and night forever.

In this verse, Paul clearly states that Christ will judge on God’s appointed day, first His household, then the unbelieving nations. Paul says this is according to his gospel. He emphasizes his gospel because he fears people may simplify, embellish, or reduce it: speaking only of blessings, not curses; grace, not righteousness; salvation, not judgment. Paul’s view of the gospel is comprehensive, balanced, applicable, sustaining, and corrective. We must heed his reminder to fully understand the gospel he presents to stand firm on the day of Christ’s judgment.

Dear brothers and sisters, Paul’s discourse on those who love to judge, though focused on the ungodly and self-righteous, but they also apply to us who are saved. Often, though we have a godly status, we fail to live a godly life. In such cases, we easily become self-righteous and prone to judging others.

Paul reminds us that in whatever we judge others, we condemn ourselves in that matter. When Christ judges, He uses His own life as the absolute standard; anything falling short is our sin. Thus, we must learn not to judge others, lest we store up God’s wrath for ourselves. We should recognize that God’s repeated longsuffering and forbearance give us opportunities to return to His goodness, to persevere in

doing good, and to seek glory, honor, and immortality. May God's life grows within us, enabling us to live a godly life outwardly. May the Lord help us.

Let us pray together: Lord, thank You for granting us the wisdom of salvation, accepting You as our lifelong Savior. We entrust our daily lives to Your gracious hands. Often, we are self-centered, focused on our own interests, forgetting to seek eternal glory and honor. Lord, thank You for reminding us through Paul's epistle that at Your return, we will face judgment at Your judgment seat, and all secret deeds will be revealed. Lord, through daily Bible reading, shine Your light on me, letting me come before You with an unveiled face. Remove desires and thoughts that displease You from my heart, and help me live a holy life daily, bearing a beautiful testimony for You at home, in life, and at work. I pray in the holy name of the Lord Jesus Christ.