

REMNANT CHURCH SERMON NOTES – ROMANS 2: 12-16
PREACHED ON NOVEMBER 16, 2025 BY REV. B.B. ANUM-HIGHER

12 All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous. 14 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.) 16 This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

➤ **INTRODUCTION**

- We come for the third time to study the second chapter of Romans. Paul continues to speak to the self-righteous men and women, maintaining that unless they abandon their self-righteousness and acknowledge the severity of their sins, particularly those hidden sins, they will never experience the blessings of the gospel.
- From the very beginning, Paul had informed us that judgment or the bad news is an essential part of the gospel message. You must first understand your terrible situation in sin to receive the blessings that come from the gospel.
- The writer of the Book of Hebrews wrote that **"27 Just as people are destined to die once, and after that to face judgment. Hebrews 9:27."** According to the author, the experience of most people is to die once on this earth, but there is another experience all humanity will face again on this earth, and it is the judgment.
- Your departed relatives and families are not yet done on this earth; they still have another experience here because both the physical death and final judgment will take place here. This immediately raises the question: what happens between death and the final judgment, the intermediate stage between death and the final judgment?
- Jesus helps answer this question in Luke 16:19-31, with the story of the rich man and Lazarus. After death, the souls of the believers go to paradise, and those of unbelievers go to hell or hades, awaiting the final day of judgment. Both the rich man and Lazarus were conscious of the activities in paradise, a place of joy, and hades, a place of torment. Scripture tells us that when Jesus returns to the earth for the second time, which will coincide with the Final Judgment, He will command the souls of believers in paradise and the unbelievers in hades to unite with their bodies to face judgment. They will join with those alive at the time of Jesus' return for the judgment.

- As you can see, death does not end your experience on this earth; death has not ended the experience of your dead relatives and friends on earth. There is another earthly experience, the final judgment.
- Matthew 25 tells us that “31 When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the angels with Him, He will sit on His glorious throne. 32 All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. All the nations, both the dead and alive will be separated into two groups - He will put the sheep on His right (heaven) and the goats on His left (hell).”
- Last week, Paul told us about the marks of the men and women who are on their way to hell. Paul wrote in Romans 2:8, “But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger.”
- Selfishness is a mark of the unbeliever, which includes the atheist and anyone in the church who hasn’t repented and believed yet. By selfishness, Paul meant that these people would love themselves more than they loved God. Their interests come first before God.
- This isn’t the first time Paul has mentioned this. In 2 Timothy 3:2, Paul informed Timothy that one of the marks of the last days, which we live in, will be selfishness.
- “2 People will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boastful, proud, abusive, disobedient to their parents, ungrateful, unholy”. 2 Timothy 3:2.

✓ **Why is selfishness such a serious thing that takes people to hell?**

1. Selfishness is idolatry, it is self-worship, it is putting yourself ahead of God, and we were not created for that. We were created to glorify God and enjoy Him forever.
2. The Ten Commandments also speak against making self-love a priority. As a believer, you are to “love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ Mark 12:30-31.

- This means whenever we put ourselves ahead of God forever and deviate from His commandments forever, we lose not only our purpose in this life, but also God’s righteousness, and what follows is God’s wrath in hell.
- Those who lived to glorify, honor God, and live for immortality will be in heaven, and those who lived a selfish life will end up in hell. The judgment will be according to works. On the Day of Judgment, God will be concerned with our morals, ethical behavior, and how we have kept His commandments.
- Here in the US, the earthly judges in the courts use the American Constitution as their standard for judgments, but what will God use for His judgment?
- Paul gives us the standard in today’s texts. We will study verses 12-16 of Romans 2. Paul says it is the Ten Commandments that God will use to judge the world.

- In Revelation 11:18-19, John saw a vision of God using the Ten Commandments to judge the world.
- He wrote: “18 The nations were angry, and Your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding Your servants the prophets and Your people who revere Your name, both great and small— and for destroying those who destroy the earth.” 19 Then God’s temple in heaven was opened, and within His temple was seen the ark of His covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm.”
- In verse 19 of Revelation 11, what did John see in the temple? He saw the ark of the Covenant? What was in the ark of the covenant? For a while, they had the budding rod of Aaron, and they also had manna for a while, but they always had the Ten Commandments. The same experience that surrounded the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai was revealed to John as He saw flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a severe hailstorm. (Exodus 19-20).

➤ VERSE 12

12 All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law.

- Paul divided humanity into two groups – those who sin while having the written Law (Jews) and those who sin without (Gentiles). Then he stated that God, in His fairness, will judge the Jews according to the Law because they had it. There is no respect of persons with God; He has no favorites. So, those without the Law (Gentiles) who sin will perish without the Law, and those with the Law (Jews) will be judged by the Law. The determining factor is sin, not whether one has the Law. Anyone who has not heard the gospel or had the Moral Law of God will not be judged by its standard. The person will be judged by their sin and will perish.
- Perish, which is punishment of sin, means eternal destruction. It is the condition, the state of those who are outside the life of God, where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched.
- What Law is Paul talking about here? It is God’s Moral Law, also called the Ten Commandments. Paul is saying that God is just and fair in His judgment, and He will judge according to our exposure to His Commandments. He judges according to the light we have received. Like the Jews, the men and women who received the Ten Commandments, the gospel, and other spiritual privileges at their homes, churches, schools, workplaces, and other places will have a greater responsibility to God.
- The Bible speaks about rewards in heaven based on our obedience to Him and faithful service, but does not specifically say there are different levels of punishment in hell. It does indicate that the judgment will indeed be experienced differently for different people. Though the final destiny may be the same, the

punishment may differ in degree. Whatever degrees of punishment hell contains, it is clear that hell is a place to be avoided.

- In Luke 10, Jesus speaks about a village that rejects the gospel: “I tell you, it will be more bearable on that day for Sodom than for that town” (verse 12). Then He speaks to Bethsaida and Chorazin: “It will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the judgment than for you” (verse 14). Whatever punishment the former residents of Sodom, Tyre, and Sidon were experiencing in hell, the Galilean towns that refused to hear Christ would experience something worse.
- Also, in Luke 12:47-48, there is an indication of degrees of punishment in hell. “The servant who knows the master’s will and does not get ready or does not do what the master wants will be beaten with many blows. But the one who does not know and does things deserving punishment will be beaten with few blows. From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked”.
- John the apostle saw a vision that indicated the judgment would indeed be experienced differently by different people. In Revelation 20:11–15, although all the people John saw are thrown into the lake of fire, they are judged “according to what they had done as recorded in the books” (Revelation 20:12).
- Paul mentioned some of the commandments God will use on the Day of Judgment for those who have the Ten Commandments, the Jews and Christians.
- 21 you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who boast in the Law, do you dishonor God by breaking the Law? Romans 2: 21-23.
- Paul, in the verses listed above, mentions stealing (8th), adultery (7th), blasphemy (3rd), and idolatry (1st) as examples of the commandments God will use as His standards of judgment.
- Is Paul saying that people who have never heard the gospel or the Ten Commandments will be freed from judgment on the Day of Judgment?
- No. Paul is saying that there are two kinds of sinners: those under the Law (Ten Commandments), who the Law will judge because they have the written Law, and those who are without the Law, and they will perish without the Law. He will explain this further in verses 14 and 15.

➤ VERSE 13

13 For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.

- Paul, as you are aware, was addressing the self-righteous people in the church in this chapter. The self-righteous person often boasts about all their religious

privileges. They know the Ten Commandments. That person will say I have been baptized as an infant, I have studied the catechisms, made a profession of faith, and have been a regular attendant at church, and I have served as a Sunday School teacher, etc. Others might say I served as an elder for two terms, engaged in street evangelism, and preached the Word of God.

- Most Christians, like the Jews, boast about their possession of the law, their ability to memorize it from childhood, and their ability to teach others. While all these matters, Paul tells us that reading, hearing, or knowing the Ten Commandments is not as important as obeying them.
- He wrote, "For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous."
- Knowing the Moral Law, the Catechism, the Bible, etc., and not obeying them puts you in the same class as the Devil. The Devil knows the Scripture but doesn't obey what it says. It is our obedience to God that will count on the Day of Judgment. None of us will have an excuse for not obeying the Ten Commandments because we have them in our Bibles and have heard them several times. The law doesn't demand mere hearing or reading but requires complete obedience.
- Knowing that the chief end of man is to glorify God and enjoy Him forever is not the same as obeying it. Living a selfish life, pursuing worldly pleasures, etc., is a denial of the Catechism, and the person who does so will perish like the unbelievers.

➤ **VERSE 14-15**

14 (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.)

- My daughter, about a month ago, during our family worship, asked me about an indigenous people in India called the Sentinelese. They are a vulnerable tribal group on a remote island in India. They want to be alone, so the Indian government does not allow anyone to reach out to them, and they do not come out either. My daughter wanted to know how they would be saved since no one had told them about the gospel, and they do not have the Ten Commandments or the Bible. 1 John 3:4 tells us that sin is a transgression of the Law, meaning a person doesn't have sin if they have not broken any law. Even in our world, we have the Latin phrase "Nullum crimen sine lege," meaning "no crime without law." The phrase reflects the principle in criminal Law and international criminal Law that a person cannot or should not face criminal punishment for an act that the Law did not criminalize at the time it was performed.

- So why would a just God send people who never heard the gospel and knew about the Ten Commandments to hell? Paul answers that question here with three points.
- First, Paul explained that God has published the works or requirements or spirit of His Law in the heart of every person. Paul argues that they possess a moral consciousness, which leads to a responsible life, working within them, making them inexcusable when they sin. Paul is not saying that God has published His law literally in the heart of every human being by nature; instead, God has written the requirements or works of the law in the human heart. Every law was meant to accomplish something, and Paul says what the law was meant to achieve, its intention, is written in the hearts of even the Gentiles. Every human being possesses a moral conscience that guides them in determining what is right and wrong.
- Even in the remotest and primitive areas of the world, you will find children, including those who live on this unreached island in India, know it is good to tell the truth and bad to be dishonest and disobey their parents. Adults know it is wrong to steal and also understand the importance of working to earn an income. People everywhere knew that it is wrong to kill, fight, and take what doesn't belong to you. How did they know all this information since they did not have the Ten Commandments? God has written what the Law was meant to accomplish on their hearts, and the hearts of everyone else born after Adam. This message on their hearts, however, cannot save them because salvation is only possible through Jesus Christ, and no one can perfectly obey the Law to be saved or justified by the Law.
- Secondly, Paul stated that God has given everyone a conscience that hints to us whenever we are going to or doing something evil. It is an internal monitor that alerts us to certain things that are wrong and shouldn't be done. It condemns us when we do wrong. While it's not a perfect instrument (it can be feeble or unenlightened, but it can be educated), we must always obey our conscience. Its primary function is negative - to tell us what is wrong rather than what is right.
- Lastly, Paul stated that even in communities without the Ten Commandments and the gospel, their reasoning among each other shows that the requirements or works of the Law are at work among them. The spirit of the Ten Commandments is at work in them. In primitive societies, people argue and defend their views on why specific actions are good and others are bad. Anthropologists will tell you that even the remotest places in this world have a sense of what is right and wrong. Why? God has placed in all of humanity after Adam the knowledge of good and evil.
- Paul tells us that God will never judge anyone who has never heard the gospel based on the provisions of the gospel because He is a just God. He will judge everyone based on the knowledge or light they have received about Him. To these indigenous people in India, what is the light they have received? It is the works of the Ten Commandments which has been written on their hearts. It is

their conscience that tells them right from wrong actions, and their reasoning process among themselves that guides them in their moral decision-making.

- Some believers are also unhappy with their lives because they feel they haven't done enough for the advancement of the kingdom. Last week and this week, Paul tells us that God examines our motives and our secrets. In Matthew 25, Jesus uses a parable to teach us that we do not all have equal opportunities and that God does not compare us because He knows each of us and has given us different resources, challenges, and so on. In the parable, one had five talents, another had two, and one had one talent. Obedience to the instruction of their master was the standard for their judgment, not the quantity of their resources. God loves diversity and has given each of us different opportunities. On the Day of Accountability, each of us will appear before Him to give an account of how we used the light He gave us, the spiritual privileges we had.
- Others might be doing great works, but if their motives aren't right or they do that for the praise of men and not to obey God, Jesus said they will hear these words from Him on the Day of Judgment.
- 21 "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name and in Your name drive out demons and in Your name perform many miracles?' 23 Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew You. Away from Me, you evildoers!' Matthew 7: 21-23.

➤ VERSE 16

16 This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares.

- Paul now made an interesting statement about judgment by works and by the Ten Commandments, saying: "This will take place on the day when God judges people's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares."
- This means that God will judge not only outward actions but also inward thoughts and motives. We will be judged not only by our deeds and actions, but as the Lord himself said, by every idle word that we have ever spoken. Not only that, by every thought, by every imagination, by everything that we have ever harbored or fostered or funneled in mind or heart or imagination. Unlike earthly judgments that can only assess external actions, God's judgment encompasses everything hidden - our thoughts, intentions, and inner life, which no one else can see.
- According to Paul, the fact that God will use the Ten Commandments as His standard to judge the world is evident in the gospel, as it has been declared in the gospel. The gospel doesn't contradict the Ten Commandments, but instead declares its role in judgment.

- The law functions in the gospel. Without the law, we wouldn't have grace, because the law reveals to us how terrible we are as enemies of God, how God's judgment appears, and how desperate our situation is and will be on the Day of Judgment. Even more worrying is the knowledge from the law that God sees through our motives, intentions, and secrets of our hearts. It is only after we have acknowledged our sinfulness that the gospel becomes meaningful to us. It is in the gospel; the righteousness of God is revealed. (Romans 1:17). The very thing we lacked is revealed in the gospel.
- While the law drives us to the gospel to attain God's righteousness to escape the coming judgment, the gospel then gives us the power to obey the Ten Commandments. Why are you a believer? The true believer does not come to the Lord for good marriages, wealth, and health, or any other physical benefits. We come to God to attain His righteousness so that we will be prepared for His judgment.
- Jesus says **33 But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. Matthew 6:33.**

➤ APPLICATION

- Like Paul, the writer of the Letter to the Hebrews tells us that God can judge even our motives, intentions, consciences, and secret things that we hide from others. He wrote: **12 For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. Hebrews 4:12.**
- Judgment is entirely in the hands of Jesus Christ, and everyone will appear before Him to be judged. John, the apostle, tells us in **John 5: 22,27. 22 Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, 27 And He has given Him authority to judge because He is the Son of Man.**
- What will be your fate on that Day? What will be the fate of those who persecuted His servants, mocked them, disrespected them, rejected the gospel, etc.? How can they look at His face on that Day? What will they say when He asks them: Did you obey the first, second, third commandments, etc.? If they have violated even one of the commandments, they will perish. Some people in the church are in greater danger because they have not yet converted, repented, and believed, despite playing active roles in the church. God will not spare them, either.
- If you are here or watching us online and find yourself in the church but have yet to become a believer, or if you have rejected this gospel, there is still an opportunity for you today to flee to Jesus Christ for His salvation. If you continue to live in your sin, rebellion, and self-righteousness, you will perish eternally with the Devil and His angels in hell.
- But to those who repented and believed, those who loved Him, glorified and honored Him, and served Him, they will be comforted and be rewarded because He has nothing against them.

- Have you wondered why Paul keeps telling us about the fate of the self-righteous? Remember that this is God's Word, not Paul's. God inspired every Letter Paul wrote.
- Sometimes, it is easier to present the Truth to an unbeliever than to a self-righteous person who has been in the church all their lives. They think they are better than all other people because they don't do what others do. They believe God is not angry with them because they are superior to others. They deceive themselves with the doctrine of election to live in their sins. They boast about their knowledge of the Bible, but what matters to God is whether they have put their trust in Him, their obedience. If you fall into this category, I invite you to conduct a self-examination. Have you repented and believed the gospel? Have you put worldly desires behind you? Are you living all your life for eternity?
- Paul tells us that knowing the Bible, being under a Biblically sound ministry, having the catechism, etc, increases your guilt before God. The self-righteous man and woman with all these spiritual privileges are far more guilty in the eyes of God than the pagan.
- To the cities that experienced most of Jesus' miracles, He told them this: **Then Jesus began to denounce the towns in which most of His miracles had been performed, because they did not repent. And you, Capernaum, will you be lifted to the heavens? No, you will go down to Hades. For if the miracles that were performed in you had been performed in Sodom, it would have remained to this Day. Matthew 11: 20,23.**
- Jesus tells us to make having His righteousness our priority. Is the righteousness of God your priority? If yes, then John tells us that Jesus is now your lawyer, your advocate who will argue your case before Him on the Day of Judgment. 1 John 2:1. Before the Father, Jesus would argue for you that even though you did not perfectly keep the Ten Commandments, His pierced feet and hands are evidence that He paid the full punishment of sins on your behalf. He had no sins but became a sinner for you and for me and suffered on the Cross for the believers. Even though we are guilty, we are clothed with His righteousness, we have washed our robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. (Revelation 7:14).
- Jesus is the only one who has delivered the believers from the wrath to come. 1 Thessalonians 1:10. Who will be your lawyer, your advocate on that Day? The believers have Jesus as their advocate. What about you? What excuse will you give for not perfectly keeping the Ten Commandments, but to keep your mouth shut?