

6. Learning Why All People Have the Law Written in Their Hearts

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children understand that there is no partiality with God. Those who have rejected the salvation that Christ provided for us will all be judged by their sins whether they are Jews or Gentiles. In contrast, all those who have repented of their sin of unbelief and placed their faith in Christ will be rewarded for all of their works that have eternal value. Both Jewish and Gentile believers will be rewarded according to their works. Today, we are going to see that all people have the law written in their hearts.

Romans 2:12 says, “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.” Many people ask the question, what will happen to those people who have never heard the Word of God and do not know the law of God? That is an important question that is answered in these verses. God says that those who have never heard the law will perish even though they have never heard the law. Those who have heard the law and committed sin by breaking the law will be judged by the law. Here, we see that all people will be judged for their sins whether they have heard the law of God or not.

The reason why all will be judged whether they have heard the law of God or not is explained in the following verses. Romans 2:13-15 says, “(for not the hearers of the law *are* just in the sight of God, but the doers of the law will be justified; for when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do the things in the law, these, although not having the law, are a law to themselves, who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves *their* thoughts accusing or else excusing *them*).” First, we see that God talks about those who have heard the law of God.

Verse 13 says that hearing the law will never justify any person in the sight of God. James 1:22-24 says, “But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.” Many of the people who hear the Word of God every Sunday have no idea how to put the Word of God into practice in their daily lives Monday through Saturday. For part of these people, this is due to the fact that they are spiritually dead and have no spiritual life in them. Here, we see that James says such people are like a person who looks at himself in a mirror and then as he walks away from the mirror immediately forgets what kind of a man he was. Such a person has no desire to be changed by the Word of God.

In order for a person to have a desire to be obedient to the Word of God, they must have spiritual life. Ephesians 2:1 says, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins.” The person who is still dead in their trespasses and sins is totally unable to have a real desire to obey the Word of God. When a person becomes a Christian, this verse says that they now have spiritual life. Once a person has spiritual life, only then will that person begin to have a desire to be obedient to the Word of God. However, even those who have spiritual life need to be helped to understand that they will only have the power to be obedient to the Word of God as they learn to yield to the Holy Spirit. That is the only way that anyone can be obedient to the Word of God.

Growing Godly Family Series – Helping Our Children Learn to Share the Gospel of God 6. “Learning Why All People Have the Law Written in Their Hearts”

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However, many Gentiles have not even heard the Word of God. In spite of the fact that many Gentiles have never heard the Word of God, we see that by nature people try to carry out certain parts of the law. Here, we see that within every person is a sense of right and wrong. As a result, even cultures that have never heard the Word of God usually develop laws against such things as stealing and murder. They also have positive values in their cultures such as being people of their word or having a sense of justice. As a result, God says that they are a law unto themselves.

Verse 15 says that such people show the work of the law written in their hearts. Judges 21:25 says, “In those days *there was* no king in Israel; everyone did *what was* right in his own eyes.” Of course, some people did much evil when they did what was right in their own eyes. However, there were others who tried to do what was right; because they were not being taught the Word of God, they tried to do what was right in their own eyes. This showed that people have the work of the law written in their hearts even when they have never heard the Word of God.

In addition to having the law written in their hearts, people who have never heard the Word of God also have a conscience that bears witness to them when they do things that are wrong. This is easily seen in a young child. Even though they have never been taught that certain things are wrong, they will try to hide from others when they do those things. Then, when someone questions them about what they have done, they will suddenly begin to look down instead of looking the person in the eye, because of their guilt.

However, as children grow older and continue to do the things that they know are wrong, they reach a point where their consciences bother them less and less. That is why 1 Timothy 4:1-2 says, “Now the Spirit expressly says that in latter times some will depart from the faith, giving heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their own conscience seared with a hot iron.” Here, we see that many people reach a point where their consciences no longer bother them. However, all people have a conscience that bothers them when they do certain things when they are younger.

Verses 15 also points out the fact that the thoughts of all people either accuse them or excuse them. The word that is translated “thoughts” in this verse is only used one other place in the New Testament. 2 Corinthians 10:5 says, “Casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ.” In this verse, the word is translated “arguments”. The word means *a judgment or a decision that the conscience passes*. Here, we see that the conscience tells a person that the person is guilty. The person may try to ignore these thoughts. However, these thoughts continue to accuse or excuse the person.

Here, we see that past choices to sin are not completely erased from the mind. Instead, those sins continue to come back to the mind. When the person tries to reject or excuse those thoughts, their thoughts seek ways to justify the sinful choices that they have made. As a result, their thoughts are actually trying to tell their conscience that they are not guilty. This is why some people reach a point where their conscience no longer bothers them. As we saw in a previous paragraph, they

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have seared their conscience so that they no longer feel guilt. Such a person is following the pattern of Pharaoh in the time of Moses when he continued to harden his heart.

However, for many people, the thoughts of a person continue to accuse him or her. When this happens, such people often make a second choice. Proverbs 31:6-7 says, “Give strong drink to him who is perishing, and wine to those who are bitter of heart. Let him drink and forget his poverty, and remember his misery no more.” Such people may turn to alcohol or some other pain killer to help them forget their accusing thoughts. Proverbs 15:13 says, “A merry heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of the heart the spirit is broken.” Proverbs 17:22 says, “A merry heart does good, *like* medicine, but a broken spirit dries the bones.” Then, Proverbs 18:14 adds, “The spirit of a man will sustain him in sickness, but who can bear a broken spirit?” Here, we see that a person develops a broken or smitten spirit that continues to accuse the person for years. Such people often turn to an addiction to try and help them forget.

As a result, when I am working with a person who has an addiction, I often tell them, “When you would like to talk about the thing that you are trying to forget, I will be glad to listen.” Often, such people will tell me at a later time that they are ready to talk about the thing or things they are trying to forget. This has provided many opportunities to lead people to Christ. When talking with such people, I often begin with Genesis 2:16-17, where we read, “And the LORD God commanded the man, saying, ‘Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.’” Then, I ask the question, “Did Adam die that day?” That provides the opportunity to explain that spiritual death is separation from God. Then, I use passages like Ephesians 2:1, “And you *He made alive*, who were dead in trespasses and sins,” to point out that the only way to heal wounds to the spirit is to receive spiritual life because wounds can never heal in a dead person.

Romans 2:16 says, “In the day when God will judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ, according to my gospel.” This verse points out the fact that at the final judgment God will judge those secret thoughts of the heart for those who have rejected the payment of Christ for sin. We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to share the Gospel both with those who are excusing their thoughts and also those who are having their thoughts accuse them. When people that are not Christians begin to realize that their thoughts are not hidden from God, this will often cause them to become open to the Father as He draws them to Christ. It is a great joy to help our children see how the Lord works through their lives as they share the Gospel with people to whom the Lord is bringing conviction. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children understand that all people have the law written in their hearts.