

Lenten Devotional March 4, 2021

Scripture

Romans 2:12-24

12 All who have sinned apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous in God's sight, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 When Gentiles, who do not possess the law, do instinctively what the law requires, these, though not having the law, are a law to themselves. 15 They show that what the law requires is written on their hearts, to which their own conscience also bears witness; and their conflicting thoughts will accuse or perhaps excuse them 16 on the day when, according to my gospel, God, through Jesus Christ, will judge the secret thoughts of all. 17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast of your relation to God 18 and know his will and determine what is best because you are instructed in the law, 19 and if you are sure that you are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, 21 you, then, that teach others, will you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You that forbid adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You that boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? 24 For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

Devotional

Chap. Nicholas Stavlund '17

Paul wrote in Romans 2 that there were some Gentiles who instinctively did what the Law required (v. 14). Apparently, these outsiders had the Law of the insiders, the chosen people, bubbling up in their gut, overflowing in their behavior. The requirements of the Mosaic law were, in Paul's words, written on their hearts. Presumably they were never taught this stuff in a classroom. Yet, despite their disposition as outsiders and their dispossession of the law, their conscience bore witness to the light of God.

In the spring of 2017, while the battle for western Mosul continued to grow increasingly violent, I saw an ISIS fighter surrender to an Iraqi military officer. Months earlier, members of this Iraqi officer's family were murdered as they tried to flee invading ISIS fighters. Surprisingly, the Iraqi officer grabbed the dejected ISIS fighter by his shoulders, looked him the eyes, and prayed that God's peace would reign in the man's heart. He didn't punch him. He didn't shoot him. He prayed for him.

I think I saw the light of God that day, not in an Anglican or Presbyterian, but in an Iraqi Army officer who's heart was broken from the violence of war. Perhaps this is what Paul was pointing to: Doers of the law of God are everywhere, even in the most surprising of places.

Prayer

O God, with you is the well of life, and in your light we see light. Quench our thirst with living water, and flood our darkened minds with heavenly light. Through Jesus Christ our Lord, who lives and reigns with you and the Holy Spirit, one God, for ever and ever, we pray. Amen.