

Romans 2:12-29 How to be right with God

Text

¹²For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; ¹³for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. ¹⁴For 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, ¹⁵in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, ¹⁶on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

¹⁷But if you bear the name "Jew" and rely upon the Law and boast in God, ¹⁸and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, ¹⁹and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, ²¹you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? ²²You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? ²⁴For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," just as it is written. ²⁵For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? ²⁸For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

Key Points in the text

- Apart from Christ we are all part of Group B.
- When we claim Christ in the market place we become a representative of God to others, and should act accordingly.
- Our outward actions do not earn us salvation, but rather because our heart is transformed our actions glorify God.

Text Study

¹²For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; ¹³for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified.

Only those who do what God wants will be right with God.

These verses introduce us to the topic of who can please God or be right with God. We learn that it is those who are doers of the law. The doers or keepers of the law, are Believers, but only because of obedience of faith.

¹⁴For 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, ¹⁵in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, ¹⁶on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

Righteousness applies to the least privileged when their hearts are changed.

- Gentiles regardless of if they have heard the law (Law given by Moses), are still responsible to keep it because it is written on their heart. We talked about this back in lesson 3 and natural revelation.
- Paul tells us that even unbelieving gentiles prove the law by doing right things by nature, or because of conscience. This proves that they know the law and so when it is broken they are responsible.

If a gentile keeps the law by grace, having been justified, rather than by nature, they will have salvation.

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Righteousness is not applied to the most privileged when their hearts are not changed.

- Jews are subject to the same criteria, in order to please God they must be doers of the law not just knowers.
- They are hypocrites thinking that knowledge is enough, this ends with them blaspheming God and without the obedience of faith they are part of Group B and will be judged harshly.
- There are those in the visible church that fall into this group, thinking that knowing the law and trying their best to keep it will be good enough, but do not live a life of obedience by faith.

The last verse also applies to those who claim to be christian but live a life antithetical to the gospel, this one is more doomed than one who just does not believe.

²⁵For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? ²⁸For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. ²⁹But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

This righteousness comes only from the spirit of God

- Do not think that works like circumcision will save you.
- The example of Abraham shows us that we are justified by faith, as he was found just before there was the law or circumcision.

Your works are of value if they are done within your obedience of faith, but outside of that they are worthless.

Verse 29 reminds us that the glory for our 'circumcision of the heart' is not ours but God's because it is an act of God (the Spirit) not my act.

Application

- Pray daily that God would by the Spirit keep your heart and mind focused on standing firm in the faith as you represent God to the world.
- Examine your heart for pride or self-righteousness that says I have done this. Think about how God had Gideon go to battle with only 300 men so that they would know it was not by their might that they had victory, but by God's.

Next Week's Lesson Prep/Preview

Text: Romans 3:1-8

Focus: God's Faithfulness and Universal Need for Righteousness

Devotional: Psalm 51

Preparation: Read the article, The Faithfulness of God

The Faithfulness of the Lord

2 Thessalonians 3:3–5 “The Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.”

When commentators seek to determine why a biblical author wrote a particular book of the Bible, they frequently look for clues in the structure of the book they are considering. They have to do this because the biblical authors rarely say something as explicit as “The reason why I am writing this book is . . .” In the case of 2 Thessalonians, Paul’s use of the word “finally” in 3:1 helps us understand the Apostle’s primary aim in writing the epistle. As is clear from the many verses that follow [2 Thessalonians 3:1](#), the word “finally” does not indicate that Paul has nothing further to say. Instead, the term indicates that Paul has completed the body of the epistle, the main argument of the letter. Since the preceding section in chapter 2 deals chiefly with the events that come before the return of Christ, we see that Paul’s chief purpose in writing was to address some confusion about the last things on the part of the Thessalonians. He had other reasons for writing, to be sure, but his chief end was to address the eschatological (end times) questions of his audience in order to establish them in the faith so that they would stand firm in the truth (2:1–17).

Standing firm in the truth would give the Thessalonians a solid basis from which they could pray for the success of the gospel and the deliverance of Paul and his co-laborers from those who did not have faith in the gospel (3:1–2). But as we see in today’s passage, the failure of some to have faith in Christ should not discourage us. The faithlessness of men and women by no means negates the faithfulness of God to His promises and to His people. Paul makes this clear in today’s passage when he reminds us that the Lord will establish us and guard us against the evil one (v. 3). Yes, we should pray to be delivered from the evil one (see [Matt. 6:13](#)), but we should never think that it is not God’s will to give us such deliverance. The Lord, in fact, delights to rescue us from Satan and his minions. We who trust in Christ alone will all experience ultimate deliverance from the devil, for we will live forever in a renewed creation while our enemy and his followers will suffer forever in the lake of fire ([Rev. 20–21](#)). Satan can have no lasting victory over the people of God.

Paul expresses his confidence “in the Lord” that the Thessalonians will be established and will have their love for God sustained ([2 Thess. 3:4–5](#)). He knew his original audience would persevere not in their own strength but in the grace and power of the Lord.

Coram Deo

One of the most precious truths about the Lord is that even if others are unfaithful, He is always faithful to us. We never need to doubt that He is working out His good purposes for us, and we must cling to this truth especially when we cannot understand what He is doing. In fact, we do not need to understand what He is doing; we need only to know that He is always perfectly faithful.