

In step with Jesus 163

August 3, 2025

Key Text: “God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth.” (John 4: 24)

Introduction

Today we shall read the remaining verses of Romans Chapter 2. So far, in the book of Romans, Paul has established our need for grace because we are all condemned sinners under God’s righteous judgement. We have also learnt that God alone is the rightful judge of the earth. His judgement is universal and impartial, and the standard of His judgement is His law, with which He will judge both the Jews and the Greek (or Gentile). God’s law has been revealed in nature as well as in the holy scriptures. Thus, in God’s reckoning, ignorance of the letter of the law is not an excuse for disobedience, and mere knowledge and accent to the letter of the law, without obedience to the law, does not justify. In this matter, God’s impartiality is revealed as He judges all humans according to the light they have received. Today’s reading is a continuation of Paul’s argument for God’s just standard of judgement. Paul’s emphasis is that obedience, rather than mere profession of religion, is what is acceptable with God. Let us read Romans 2:12-29 and see what we can learn.

Romans 2:12- 29

12 For 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. 13 For it is not the hearers of the law who are righteous before God, but the doers of the law who will be justified. 14 For when Gentiles, who do not have the law, by nature do what the law requires, they are a law to themselves, even though they do not have the law. 15 They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them 16 on that day when, according to my gospel, God judges the secrets of men by Christ Jesus.

17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God 18 and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; 19 and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— 21 you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.

24 For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

25 For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. 26 So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. 28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

Reflections

In today’s reading Paul continues to emphasize the universality of God’s law and God’s judgement. But in his argument for God’s law, he systematically removes the religious barriers that separated the Jews from the Gentiles. The Jews had believed that their knowledge of God’s law and their outward circumcision elevated them above people of other races and religion, but Paul argues that obedience, not profession, is that which justifies. Paul literally takes our relationship with God away from the limitations of race, outward performances and religious positions, and places it in the realm of the Spirit. It is not the outward performance that saves, but the heart that loves God and His law. It is not the Jews who have the law that will be saved but all people who obey the law of God according to the revelations they have received. In other words, it is not the religious people who go to church that will be saved but everyone who live their lives in obedience to God’s law.

I have met people who seem to believe that attending church is the same as being a Christian or a believer. But Paul’s message in Romans chapter 2 clearly tells us that outward profession of religion does not justify anyone. In fact, Paul says that accepting high religious standards or being a religious teacher or preacher will not profit us anything unless we are living our lives according to the standards of God’s law. What that means is that the religion of Christ must change us.

This calls for humility, especially on the part of those of us who profess Jesus as our Lord and personal savior. We can perform as much as we can before men, we can get all the accolades and approval of men because of our teachings and our profession of faith, but we will gain nothing with God if we are not obedient to God’s revealed will. Unfortunately, we cannot hide our secret sins and disobedience from the righteous judge of the whole earth. He sees everything. But the good news is that He is the author and the finisher of our faith. He can change us if we allow Him. All we need to do is to stay close to Jesus in His word, the more we look to Him, the more we are changed into His likeness. That is the work of grace and grace is all we need.