

In step with Jesus 164

August 10, 2025

Key Text: For by grace, you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2: 8-9)

Introduction

We praise God for another privilege to learn of Him from the book of Romans. As I think about what Paul had written so far, it seems to me that Paul had a real burden to convince his audience about the hopelessness of the human condition and humanity's need for the grace of God. Paul was emphasizing and re-emphasizing the same issues in different ways. If Paul's writing was peer-reviewed today, one of the reviewers' comments would be that Paul is repetitive in his arguments and expressions. But I believe that Paul's repetition was his deliberate effort to ensure that no one misses the point. In fact, to understand Paul's repetitive message in the book of Romans, is to understand the science of salvation. Repeatedly, Paul emphasizes that the law of God is the eternal standard of His judgement against all ungodliness. Neither Jews, who had the letter of the law, nor the Gentiles, who did not have the written law, would be exempt from the just requirements of the law. Yet, before the law, both Jews and Gentiles are condemned. Paul says that the only hope for all is obedience to the Law, which can only be possible by God's grace through Jesus Christ, and that grace has been made available to all, Jews and Gentiles alike. This is the good news of salvation.

Today we will continue reading Paul's argument about God's righteousness and grace over human unrighteousness and selfishness. In today's text, Paul zooms in on the privileged position of the Jews as the custodians of God's law and channels of His light. But his emphasis remains that even the favored Jews are not justified by the deeds of the law, but by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. Let us read Romans chapter 3 verses 1 to 20 and see what we can learn about God's faithfulness.

Romans 3: 1-20

Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision? ² Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God. ³ What if some were unfaithful? Does their faithlessness nullify the faithfulness of God? ⁴ By no means! Let God be true though everyone were a liar, as it is written, "That you may be justified in your words, and prevail when you are judged." ⁵ But if our unrighteousness serves to show the righteousness of God, what shall we say? That God is unrighteous to inflict wrath on us? (I speak in a human way.) ⁶ By no means! For then how could God judge the world? ⁷ But if through my lie God's truth abounds to his glory, why am I still being condemned as a sinner? ⁸ And why not do evil that good may

come? —as some people slanderously charge us with saying. Their condemnation is just.

⁹ What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, ¹⁰ as it is written: “None is righteous, no, not one; ¹¹ no one understands; no one seeks for God.

¹² All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one.” ¹³ “Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive.” “The venom of asps is under their lips.” ¹⁴ “Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness.”

¹⁵ “Their feet are swift to shed blood; ¹⁶ in their paths are ruin and misery, ¹⁷ and the way of peace they have not known.” ¹⁸ “There is no fear of God before their eyes.”

¹⁹ Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God. ²⁰ For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

Reflections

Some believers have misunderstood Paul’s position with regards to the Jews and the Law of God. They assume that Paul’s writings nullify the law and the privilege of the Jews. But on the contrary, today’s reading shows that Paul recognized the Jews as God’s chosen and favored people and the custodians of His eternal law. He argues that the Jews had a great advantage over others because God, in His faithfulness, had committed His oracles unto them. Paul’s argument reflects the Psalmist’s praise in Psalm 147:19 where the Psalmist praises God for showing His word to Jacob and His statutes and judgment to Israel. The Jews were chosen, not because they were righteous or better than all other people but because of God’s grace towards them, and by extension, God’s grace towards all of humanity. The knowledge of God’s word was Israel’s privilege and power but only on the condition of obedience. But as we know, Israel was unfaithful to God. Nevertheless, Paul argues that even Israel’s unfaithfulness serves the purpose of revealing God’s faithfulness. His argument, he clarified, does not in any way justify sin or unrighteousness but affirms God as righteous, true and faithful whereas all of humanity, including the Jews are unrighteous, liars and unfaithful. Rather than nullify God’s law, Paul elevates God’s law, but he systematically destroys every foundation of human pride and inclination towards self-exaltation.

Just like the Jews of old, believers in these last days cannot claim to be better or superior to others but surely, we have the privilege of knowing God’s law and grace. What we do with that knowledge will make a difference. I pray that God will help us to keep the faith we have in Jesus and walk before God in humility, praise and gratitude for what He has done for us.