

## In step with Jesus 165

August 17, 2025

**Key Text: “For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, declares the Lord: I will put my law within them, and I will write it on their hearts. And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.” (Jeremiah 31:33)**

### Introduction

Today we will continue reading what I describe as Paul’s repetitive message about salvation by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. In our reading last week, we see Paul establishing the privileged position of the Jews over all nations by reason of their acquaintance with God, and their knowledge of His law. Yet he also argues that such privilege remains a gift of grace, not just for the Jews, but for the whole world. Let us read the remaining verses of Romans chapter 3 and see what we can learn about God’s grace in relation to His law, and His relationship with all of humanity, Jews and Gentiles alike. Let us read from verse 19 because it helps us understand Paul’s thinking in the remaining verses.

### Romans 3: 19-31

<sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> For by works of the law no human being will be justified in his sight, since through the law comes knowledge of sin.

<sup>21</sup> But now the righteousness of God has been manifested apart from the law, although the Law and the Prophets bear witness to it— <sup>22</sup> the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ for all who believe. For there is no distinction: <sup>23</sup> for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, <sup>24</sup> and are justified by his grace as a gift, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, <sup>25</sup> whom God put forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith. This was to show God's righteousness, because in his divine forbearance he had passed over former sins. <sup>26</sup> It was to show his righteousness at the present time, so that he might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.

<sup>27</sup> Then what becomes of our boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? By a law of works? No, but by the law of faith. <sup>28</sup> For we hold that one is justified by faith apart from works of the law. <sup>29</sup> Or is God the God of Jews only? Is he not the God of Gentiles also? Yes, of Gentiles also, <sup>30</sup> since God is one—who will

justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. <sup>31</sup> Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law.

### **Reflections**

Paul continues to argue for the preeminence of faith and the grace of God over law. He continues to emphasize that no one will be justified by the works of the law. But why then do we need the law? The bible provides the answer. We need the law because without the law, we will not have the knowledge of sin. We will not know what is acceptable to God and what is not. So, the law is there to show us what is good and bad. Moreover, the law of God reflects His character. Therefore, obedience to the law brings us closer to the image of God as He designed us at creation. However, simply obeying the law cannot justify anyone. This is because, human beings can keep the letter of the law, but our human nature is at variance and will always be at variance with the Spirit of the law. Therefore, while we can outwardly perform acts that align with the law, our hearts will always be contrary to the Spirit of the law.

The Spirit behind the law is supreme love for God and loving our neighbor as ourselves. That love is a manifestation of our faith and trust in God. God created us in His image, to love and trust Him. However, after the disobedience of Adam and Eve, in the garden of Eden, human nature changed forever. By disobedience, the Spirit of love which is based on trust or faith, was exchanged for the spirit of selfishness and fear. Hence without the help of God, the underlying motive for every human action is selfishness and fear, rather than love and trust. Therefore, it is possible to keep the letter of the law and still be condemned before God because the motive is not and can never be love and trust, without God's grace.

The good news is that grace is free for all. According to Paul, it is not the Jews who had circumcision that are justified, but all men and women who will accept God's forgiveness in Jesus Christ by faith. We are all sinners, but God forgave us and cleansed us with the blood of Jesus Christ. The best news of all is that it is God who is just, that is also the justifier of all who believe. He will not diminish His law, but He will give us a new heart. He will replace our selfishness and fear with faith and love. That way, obedience to His law will become natural and easy. We serve an amazing God of love. We can trust Him.