

Part Five – Romans 2:12-29

Last time we covered the principles of God's Judgement and how they are applied, and also acknowledged that there are some things about God's Judgement that He doesn't make known to us.

Those of us who have experienced God's Mercy in our lives know that He will always exercise mercy where He is able to do so; so we have to trust His perfect judgement.

Next in this letter Paul covers the matter of conscience which is a rather difficult subject to deal with.

Romans 2:12-15, 26-27 This passage shows how God deals with people who do not have a revelation of Him in His Word.

Romans 2:12 [NIV] *"All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law."*

Everyone will be judged by God according to the extent that they have been exposed to God's Word.

Romans 2:13 [NIV] *"For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous."*

Where it says "*The Law*" in this verse the word "*The*" has been added by translators, this addition has been made frequently in this letter.

Paul is taking the pattern of the perfect Law of God given through Moses but also referring to any other form of law.

There are only two possible ways of achieving righteousness:

- a) by keeping rules;
- b) by trusting God in faith.

The natural instinct of a human mind when challenged on the issue of righteousness is to think in terms of rules to be obeyed.

What Paul is saying applies to any set of rules by which people might seek to make themselves righteous.

The end result of Paul's logical argument is that it is impossible for anyone to be made righteous by keeping any set of rules.

Christianity is not a set of rules – we do not achieve righteousness with God by keeping a set of rules.

Rules do have a place in life but not to achieve righteousness (more on this later in the study).

Romans 2:13 [King James] *"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified."*

Note it says "*Doers of Law shall be justified.*"

Doesn't say they are righteous but that God will impute righteousness to them [NIV – “will be declared righteous” Greek “dikaioma” – declared {imputed} righteousness] given the righteousness of Jesus Christ.

The Hebrew and Greek word for “hear” has a fuller meaning than the English word. “Hear” it denotes attentive hearing that results in doing. Since Israel alone had the law thus only Israel can hear and obey the law.

Romans 2:14 [NIV] *“Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law,”*

No direct revelation of God's Law but there is something inside them that acts the same as law.

Romans 2:15 [NIV] *“since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”*

It is **not** the law written in their hearts [minds] but the [Greek - “ergon”] working of law.

Something that achieves the same end as law.

To bring us to the point when we see we need God's Mercy.

That we may then be made righteous by God.

Romans 7:7-11 [NIV] *“What shall we say, then? Is the law sin? Certainly not! Indeed I would not have known what sin was except through the law. For I would not have known what coveting really was if the law had not said, “Do not covet.” But sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, produced in me every kind of covetous desire. For apart from law, sin is dead. Once I was alive apart from law; but when the commandment came, sin sprang to life and I died. I found that the very commandment that was intended to bring life actually brought death. For sin, seizing the opportunity afforded by the commandment, deceived me, and through the commandment put me to death.”*

“Conscience” The function in man that produces this “working of law”.

Romans 2:15 [NIV] *“since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.”*

It is a kind of court scene going on in our mind.

One thought says “you told a lie” – another thought says “no it was just a shading of the truth”.

There was no intention of deceiving but it was still a lie.

Conscience in our spirit is doing the same as law does.

Inside every human mind [spirit] is something that monitors morality [by God's standards] according to the culture we are brought up in.

For example, for some religious faiths it is wrong to lie to a brother in the same faith but alright to lie to anyone outside your faith.

Romans 2:26-27 [King James] *“Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?”*

“Righteousness [requirements] of Law”

“*Righteousness*” – “*dikaioma*” – when we respond to the demand of the law, that is see our need for God’s Mercy.

It makes no difference if we have the law given by God through Moses [circumcised] or it is the “*working of law*” in our minds [un-circumcised] as long as it has the same end result - showing us the need for Christ’s sacrifice and the Mercy of God.

There are some examples that the religious person has the wrong response to law.

If keeping the law generates pride in his mind, considering himself as better than those who do **not** keep his set of laws, mosaic or denominational.

There are in some examples where the **non**-religious person responds in the **right** way, as a result of the “*working of the law*” in their mind, bringing them to see their need for God’s Mercy.

Luke 18:11-14 [NIV] *“The Pharisee stood up and prayed about himself: ‘God, I thank you that I am not like other men, robbers, evildoers, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.’ ‘But the tax collector stood at a distance. He would not even look up to heaven, but beat his breast and said, ‘God, have mercy on me, a sinner.’ ‘I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.”*

Example of Pharisee [keeper of law] and publican [without law].

God is interested in the people who deliver not those who just talk !!

Romans 2:17-25

Paul now concentrates on his fellow Jews and gives several examples of how they break the law although they boast of the law.

Romans 2:17 [King James] *“Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,”*

This has **not** changed in the minds of Jews to this present day. “*Rest in law*” – **trusted** in obedience to law for right relationship with God.

Romans 2:18 [NIV] *“if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law;”*

Know what the rules are.

Romans 2:19-20 [NIV] *“if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth,”*

Set themselves up as teachers of others, an attitude of self-righteousness pride.

Nothing creates pride more easily than religious knowledge, we are all in danger of becoming proud because we have knowledge.

Romans 2:21-24 [NIV] *“you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law? As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”*

Isn't this what the world in general is saying at this time to the church in general with all its divisions and scandals?

This passage is directed **now** mainly to Christians who have the knowledge but **not** always living by that knowledge.

Living by rules against doing things makes us disposed to do them [this will be expanded on and amplified in future studies.]

Example:- When we are not observing one of our children they muddle all the organised papers on our desk and scribble on some of them.

We then tell them that they are not to ever do that again (lay down the law).

You know what goes on in that child's mind.

There is just one thing they want to do, "*write*" on granddad's papers the next time he is not looking.

This is a real example I've experienced.

This is true in religion; preaching against things makes people want to do them.

Romans 2:22 [NIV] "*You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?*"

"You who abhor idols, do you rob temples"

This could be explained by statement in **Malachi 3:7-8**, taking what is God's, stealing from God.

Tithing doesn't apply as a law in the New Covenant as it did in laws given through Moses.

But I believe the principle of a tithe still applies to our level of free-will offering.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8 [NIV] "*Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*"

Romans 2:28-29 [NIV] "*A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.*"

Paul is saying whatever we do outwardly isn't what really matters. How we worship God the outward form.

What matters is what is in our relationship with God in our minds, and spirit.

We are only a real Jew if your praise comes from God and is based on what we are inwardly and not of our outward ordinances that are seen of men.

These scripture are **not** confirmation that everyone who believes in God is a Jew.

We are members of the body of Christ in which Jew and non-Jew come together and form one body.

Being a Christian does **not** make us "*spiritual Jews*".

This is important for some teach we are all Jews and what applies to Jews applies to all Christians.

1 Corinthians 12:13 [NIV] *“For we were all baptised by one Spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free, and we were all given the one Spirit to drink.*

One body whether Jew or gentile.

Galatians 3:26-29 [NIV] *“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise.”*

... all one in Christ Jesus.

Romans 9:6-9 [NIV] *“It is not as though God’s word had failed. For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel. Nor because they are his descendants are they all Abraham’s children. On the contrary, “It is through Isaac that your offspring will be reckoned.” In other words, it is not the natural children who are God’s children, but it is the children of the promise who are regarded as Abraham’s offspring. For this was how the promise was stated: “At the appointed time I will return, and Sarah will have a son.”*

It is not the children of the flesh descendants of Abraham who are the children of God but the children of the promise are regarded as children of God.

The qualification of being true Israelite of God is embracing the promises of God.

Example is than given of the difference between Ishmael, the child of the flesh, and Isaac [Jacob/Israel] the child of the promise.

The result of a miracle from God when both Abraham and Sarah were past normal age for child-bearing.

Galatians 6:15-16 [NIV] *“Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is a new creation. Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God.”*

What really matters is what happens inside of our minds and spirit, the rebirth.

“And the Israel of God” - those of Israel [Old Covenant of law] who have embraced the promise, acknowledge Christ as the Messiah, and entered into the blessings of the New Covenant, [of faith.]

In Christian terms, it is not the fact we are baptised, it is what has happened inside our minds by a miracle from God since that baptism and receiving gift of Holy Spirit

This is where God looks.

That is what is important to our Creator God.