

Soul-Full: Living Out a Robust Faith

A Study in Romans

Week 2 – Romans 2:1-3:31 – The Condemnation of Sin

In Chapter 1 Paul makes it clear that the unbelieving Gentiles are residing under God's wrath because God has woven His DNA into His creation "...so that they are without excuse" (1:20). Paul describes the characteristics of those who willfully reject God, who are "filled with all unrighteousness" (1:29), who are indulging the lust of the flesh with "a depraved mind [doing] those things which are not proper" (1:28). They engage in perversion, depravity, and "...also give hearty approval to those who practice them" (1:32). In Chapter 2 Paul turns the spotlight on his own people, the Jews, and shows that they are equally condemned as sinners before God. He declares that any Jew who is outside a personal relationship with Christ resides under God's judgment. This was staggering news to the Jews who considered themselves to have a privileged relationship with God and thought God would deal with them differently than the wretched Gentiles. In Chapter 3 Paul concludes the whole world, Jew and Gentile alike, apart from a personal relationship with Christ, is under condemnation. At the end of Chapter 3, Paul, having made a case for the lost condition of all mankind, introduces the theme of justification by faith.

I. Religious But Lost-Romans 2:1-29

Not all who are outside a personal relationship with Christ manifest the debauchery Paul describes in Chapter 1. Beginning in Chapter 2, Paul addresses the dangerous and damnable nature of self-righteousness found in both the Jew and the Gentile. While the out-and-out reprobate rejects God, the up-and-out believe they have earned a right standing with God by maintaining a high moral code of ethical behavior or engaging in religious rituals.

The kindness of God is intended to lead unbelievers (both Jew and Gentile) to the saving knowledge of Christ. Paul wrote, "This is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth" (1 Tim. 2:3-4). The Jews misinterpreted God's goodness to them. His goodness was intended to lead them to repentance. Instead, they hardened their hearts while erroneously trusting in their own self-righteousness achieved through religious activity. They believed God's wrath and judgment was reserved for the heathen Gentiles, not for the religious Jews.

The Jews looked down on the Gentiles believing them to be blind fools, lost in their sin. The Jews considered themselves to be God's exclusive favorite. The Jews boasted of their ceremonial rituals and traditions, including the rite of circumcision, which identified them with the living God. Trusting in their traditions to "...curry God's favor, they failed to act in faith. For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard" (Heb. 4:2). The Jews, with all their religious rituals, were (are) abiding under God's condemnation just like the Gentiles. In fact,

more so, because the Jews had been given greater privileges and opportunities to know the truth.

II. There is None Righteous-Roman 3:1-18

The Jews were privileged as they "...were entrusted with the oracles of God" (3:2). Sadly, that did not lead them to the saving knowledge of Christ by grace through faith. Instead, for the most part, it led to religious rituals and legalism, which amounts to little more than external rule keeping without experiencing a change of heart. Therefore, the unbelieving Jews are under the condemnation of God along with the Gentiles. The Jews with their privileges were (are) no better or worse than the Gentiles. Both are sinners in need of a Savior. Paul makes it clear that "...there is none righteous, not even one; there is none who understands, there is none who seeks for God; all have turned aside, together they have become useless; there is none who does good, there is not even one" (3:10-12). Reprobate or religious, we are all sinners in need of a Savior!

III. Justification by Faith-Romans 3:19-31

The Jew has nothing to boast in because salvation is through faith in Christ and not in keeping the Law. "A man is not justified by the works of the Law but through faith in Christ Jesus, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, so that we may be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; since by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified" (Gal. 2:16). The Gentiles were "...separate from Christ, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world" (Eph. 2:12). The Gentiles have nothing to fear because both Jews and Gentiles are saved the same way — by faith. "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of the Law" (Rom. 3:28).

The Law reveals sinful mankind's need for a Savior. It declares God's holy standards and reveals man's utter hopelessness in his ability to keep it. In Galatians 3:24 Paul wrote, "Therefore the Law has become our tutor to lead us to Christ, so that we might be justified by faith. Salvation is through faith in Jesus Christ for all those who believe; for there is no distinction; for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:22-24). Faith has always been God's method of salvation. "Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. For by it the men of old gained approval" (Heb. 11:1-2).

Salvation by grace through faith does not negate the Law, which demands death for sin. Rather, the gospel establishes the Law because "Christ died for sins once for all, the just for the unjust, so that He might bring us to God" (1 Peter 3:18). In Christ, "...there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:11).

“For by grace you have been saved through faith...” (Eph. 2:8) in the Lord Jesus Christ. “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness” (Titus 3:5). We are saved not by works of righteousness, but by faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (Gal. 3:26-28). Beloved, this is the basis for living a robust faith!

Get your Soul-Full of Jesus and live for Him!!