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Romans 2 - Part 2

(2:17-29; 3:1-20)

Romans 2:17-20: 17. Behold, thou art called a Jew, and rest in ^(G1879) the law, and make thy boast of God, 18. And know his will, and approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; 19. And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, 20. An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in ^(G1722) the ^(G3588) law ^(G3551).

The same concept, rest in ^(G1879) the ^(G3588) law ^(G3551) in verse 17, is expressed in verse 20 using different words. It is also used in verse 12 with the definite article supplied: *For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in* ^(G1722) *(the) law* ^(G3551) *shall be judged by the law*; The Greek word *en* ^(G1722) is a preposition with the primary idea of rest in any place or thing, and denotes a fixed position in, or remaining in. The Jews rested in the law and were instructed out of the law, but only had a form of knowledge and truth. Anyone having only a form of knowledge and truth will only have a form of Godliness. Paul warned that this would happen in the last days: **2 Timothy 3:1-2, 5:** 1. *This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come.* 2. *For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud....* 5. *Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.* Every religious organization today rests in some form of knowledge based on their understanding of God. Because of a faulty understanding, most view Him as an angry God requiring a sacrifice to satisfy the law and so that mankind could be forgiven.

Romans 2:21-24: 21. *you then who teach others, will 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, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?* 24. *For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."* (RSV) How were the Jews stealing? **Jeremiah 23:30-32:** 30. *Therefore, behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that steal my words every one from his neighbor.* 31. *Behold, I am against the prophets, saith the Lord, that use their tongues, and say, He saith.* 32. *Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the Lord, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord.* Jewish history is fraught with cycles of a broken relationship with God because priests became spiritual thieves and spiritual adulterers, and were giving the people only a form of knowledge mingled with their own ideas, and telling the people God said it. The problem is no different today. Today, God's name is blasphemed among unbelievers who scoff at religions because their leaders have shown the hypocrisy of their beliefs by their own lifestyle.

When I was 15 years old, the Dad of my best buddy ask me what I would like to do in life. I told him that I thought I wanted to be a preacher. His response was on the order of, "Yes, that could be a good career where you could make pretty good money." That attitude existed in the 1950s when many of this nation were pretty serious about living up to their religious beliefs.

Romans 2:25-29: 25. *For circumcision verily profits, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.* 26. *Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law,*

shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? 27. 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? 28. For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: 29. But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God. Paul uses the terms *circumcision* and *uncircumcision* metaphorically to represent Jew and Gentile, also outward in the flesh and inward as pertains to the heart. A literal Jew demands literal circumcision and keeping of the letter of the law (Acts 15:5), while a spiritual Jew's circumcision is in the heart, made without hands (Col 2:11).

What is the righteousness of the law kept by the uncircumcised of heart? Paul wrote: *if righteousness come by the law, then Christ is dead in vain* (Gal 2:21); and again: *for if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily righteousness should have been by the law* (Gal 3:21). The righteousness of which Paul stated in the book of Galatians is based on his own experience: **Philippines 3:8-9**: *8. Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus (His knowledge) my Lord... that I may win Christ, 9. And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is [from] the law, but that which is [by means of] the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is [from] God by faith:* Faith comes by hearing (Rom 10:17) the words Christ speaks to your conscience. **Galatians 3:2**: *This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? The form of righteousness the uncircumcised of every nation has today is that law written in stone - the outward form of the law. God's spirit, His righteousness, is received by hearing and understanding the words Jesus speaks to your heart* (Jn 6:63).

Romans 3:1-4: *1. What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit is there of circumcision? 2. Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. 3. For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? 4. [Let it not be]: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That you might be justified [regarded as innocent, or made righteous] in thy sayings, and might overcome when you art judged.* The *oracles of God* refer to the law given at Sinai (Acts 7:38). It is a schoolmaster, or teacher to bring us to Christ (Gal 3:24); therefore, anyone having the law has an advantage over a person who does not.

Verse 3 is more accurately translated in the New Jerusalem Bible, and other versions: *What if some of them were unfaithful? Do you think their lack of faith could cancel God's faithfulness?* Paul urges everyone to see that only God is true but every man a liar. However, everyone having the oracles of God do not receive God's faith, i.e. His understanding of the law. And everyone is judged when the truth of God comes, whether direct from God as you read the Bible, or through another person who accurately expresses it and God impresses the heart.

Romans 3:9-18: *9. What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; 10. As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: 11. There is none that understands, there is none that seeks after God. 12. They are all gone out of the way, they are together become unprofitable; there is none that does good, no, not one. 13. Their throat is an open sepulcher; with their tongues they have used deceit; the poison of asps is under their lips: 14. Whose mouth is full of cursing and bitterness: 15. Their feet are swift to shed blood: 16. Destruction and misery are in their ways: 17. And the way of peace have they not known: 18. There is no fear of God before their eyes.* Whether Jew or Gentile, one having the law or not having the law, there is not one that is righteous. What does the term under sin mean?

Romans 3:19-20: *19. Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God. 20. Therefore by the deeds*

of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law is the knowledge of sin. To be *under sin* (verse 9) is to have sin as your master - i.e. be ruled or governed by the sin in your life. *Under the law* means the same as the phrase discussed above - *in the law*. It is natural to *rest in* the law in one way or another - i.e. be guided by the law, the result being that sin dominates our lives. Paul said *For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under (ruled by) the law, but under (governed by) grace* (Rom 6:14). Mistakenly, people are taught that since the cross we are no longer under the law, but under grace. What about the Jews? After the cross most of them insisted on being under the law and would not receive the God's grace manifested by the Messiah (Jn 1:17). If the churches were truly under grace, they would not be condemning non-Christians and members of other denominations, as well as each other. Changing from being under the law to being under grace is an experience, and not just an intellectual change based on reading a scripture. Additionally, the teaching implies that grace did not exist before the cross. The key component of grace is to love your enemies (cf Lk 6:32-34: thank=grace), which is what the Father and Son demonstrated at the cross. Has God's love always existed?

No amount of law keeping (called deeds or works of law) will make a person righteous in God's sight. So, what is meant *by the law is the knowledge of sin*? The Jews were attempting to keep all the laws, and the Pharisees were trying to look righteous by their works of law-keeping. Jesus told them, **Matthew 23:25-26**: *25. ...for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. 26. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.* In other words, the thoughts must be changed in order to change the outward acts permanently. There is a benefit of keeping the law, as it does restrain evil to a point. It is referred to as "will worship" (Col 2:23) - i.e. refraining from the outward acts of stealing, adultery, etc., yet still having a corrupt heart. Most view the Bible (law) from a forensic, or legal standpoint; and they view man's relationship to God as being governed by the book. The law however, is there to give us full knowledge of the sin in our hearts, which cannot be done unless the law (instruction) is viewed allegorically as pertaining to the inward man. Examples: heavens, earth and sea are references to ways of thinking; beasts are a metaphor of character of thought; and beasts dwell in the heavens, earth and sea. **Job 12:7-8**: *7. But ask now the beasts, and they shall teach thee; and the fowls of the air, and they shall tell thee: 8. Or speak to the earth, and it shall teach thee: and the fishes of the sea shall declare unto thee.* God has hidden spiritual things in the written word that most do not understand and will not receive. The scriptures even say it; we read it in Romans 1:20. Here is another place: **Proverbs 25:2**: *It is the glory of God to conceal a thing (literally - a word): but the honor of kings is to search out a matter (a word).* {cp Amos 3:7-8 & Rv 10:1, 3}

Coming to Christ is a matter of repentance. However, to be justified by the faith of Christ (Gal 3:24) requires a person to listen to His voice daily and be totally transformed in their thinking (Rom 12:2). Peter indicated this on the Day of Pentecost: **Acts 3:19**: *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.* Repentance (a change the direction of your thinking) is conversion, the place where most Christians are today. The blotting out of sins takes place in the mind as a person receives God's way of understanding (called the faith of Christ). **Isaiah 53:11**: *...by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many...* Rest in Christ's knowledge and not man's. Amen.