



Focus Points...*For Romans 2*

Listen...

- * To how Paul stresses the importance of holy living as a key indicator that Christian faith is living in the heart of the grace-bought believer.

Prayer:

“Salvation unto Us Has Come”*

Salvation unto us has come
By God’s free grace and favor;
Good works cannot avert our doom,
They help and save us never.
Faith looks to Jesus Christ alone,
Who did for all the world atone;
He is our one Redeemer.

What God did in His Law demand
And none to Him could render
Caused wrath and woe on every hand
For man, the vile offender.
Our flesh has not those pure desires
The spirit of the Law requires,
And lost is our condition.

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Commentary:

One of the key emphases of Romans 2 is that those who sin have “no excuse.” In 1:29ff. Paul described the manifestation of sin in Rome.

“They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, and ruthless. Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.” Romans 1:29-32

While Paul urged the Romans to repentance (2:4), he also warned the unrepentant sinners of the consequences of their life of sin.

“Because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when His righteous judgment will be revealed.” (2:5)

Note that the concept of grace is almost entirely absent in Romans 2. Those who do evil will be punished while “glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good.” (2:10) Note Paul's teaching in 2:13, “It is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous.”

Paul was not alone in emphasizing the importance of good works as it relates to salvation. In Jesus' teaching of the Judgment of the Sheep and the Goats (Matthew 25), He taught that good works were the basis for being saved or damned. In his Gospel, John often called Christians to follow Jesus and walk in obedience. The Epistle of James, as Luther noted, is heavily oriented towards good works. Yet James provides one of the best arguments for Paul—and Christians—to emphasize good works.

“What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, ‘Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed,’ but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, ‘You have faith; I have deeds.’ Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do.” (James 2:14-18).

Like James and the other apostles, Paul knew that we are not saved by doing good works. Paul, unlike the sinful hoards of evildoers at Rome, knew that you can't claim to have faith while willingly and unrepentantly continuing in sin (cf. Romans 6:1ff., *et al.*).

Romans 2 is an excellent example demonstrating how to minister to believers who persist in their sin. They need to be confronted with their sin, urged to repentance, and called to live a life of holiness. They—like us—need the Law to show their sins. They—like us—need the undeserved working of God in grace to cleanse, forgive and empower us to good works.

The main message for the Romans in chapter 2 was to circumcise their hearts. As Paul called them to spiritual circumcision, he was reminding them of God's covenant at Sinai (Exodus 19-20). There God showed His grace by calling the most insignificant non-nation on earth to be His people. In response, they were to keep the Covenant by holy living. Paul's call to holy living, then, is really a call to remember God's covenant of grace into which they were called.

Paul's words that “God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you” (2:24) and his reference to those who are “circumcised” (2:25ff.) indicate who made up Paul's Roman audience. It appears the Roman church consisted

largely in Jewish converts. Certainly there were Gentile converts as well. But several sections of this letter seem to be written specifically for Jewish converts, especially Romans 9-11.

Prayer:

Salvation unto Us Has Come
Faith clings to Jesus' cross alone
And rests in Him unceasing;
And by its fruits true faith is known,
With love and hope increasing.
For faith alone can justify;
Works serve our neighbor and supply
The proof that faith is living.

Salvation Unto Us Has Come
Hymn # 355 from *Lutheran Worship*
St. Louis: Concordia Publishing House

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