

(T) Welcome to **Discipleship training On The Air**. In this Bible study series two teachers will do Bible study from ROMANS 2:1-16.

In Romans chapter 1, Paul showed that the Gentiles are *experiencing God's wrath* and that they need God's righteousness. The Jews, however, still believed that God would judge the Jews in a different way than the Gentiles, because they thought that the Jews were God's chosen people and possessed unique privileges. They believed that in virtue of the fact that God called them 'his people' and in virtue of the fact that they performed the law, they could claim exemption from God's wrath. Therefore, in Romans 2:1-16, Paul shows that also the Jews are *storing up God's wrath* for themselves and that also they need God's righteousness.

(S) **STEP 1. READ**

Let us read Romans 2:1-16 together. When you are two or more people, take turns to read one verse each until you have completed the reading. Due to shortage of time, please read Romans 2:1-16 for yourself.

(T) **STEP 2. DISCOVER**

Let us discover and discuss some important truths in Romans 2:1-16. "Which truth in this passage is important for you?" or "Which truth in this passage touches your mind or heart?" Think and write your answer in your notebook. After a few minutes take turns to share your discoveries.

(S) An important truth for me is from Romans 2:1-4 about the reason why also the Jews are condemned.

One. The Jews were hypocrites (1). The Gentiles were openly degenerate. They did what was evil and approved of people doing evil. The Gentiles *did not condemn* others for the wicked things they did, but on the contrary *tolerated* godlessness and wickedness. In contrast, the Jews pretended that they were righteous and good. The Jews *condemned* the Gentiles for the wicked things they did, while they themselves were doing the very same wicked things.

Two. The Jews were presumptuous (2-3). The Jews assumed that God's judgement regarding the Jews would be guided by some other rule than *the truth*. They expected that God would judge the Jews, not according to their real conduct, but according to their national and religious relationship with God. They believed that the fact that they were the physical descendants of Abraham and circumcised, they were *God's special people and exempt from punishment*. However, God's judgement will be based on their real life and works. Jews do not have any privileged position above Gentiles. Jews must not think that they will escape God's sentence of condemnation.

Three. The Jews showed contempt (4). Throughout the history of the Jews, God has shown his kindness, tolerance and patience to the Jews as his covenant people. God expressed his tolerance by time and again restraining himself from punishing them for their sins and by continually bearing their provocations against him. However, the Jews throughout their history and especially during the New Testament times despised God's dealings with them (cf. Acts 13:42-52). In their presumption, they *completely misinterpreted* God's kindness, tolerance and patience with them as a guarantee that God indulged their personal sins and that God would not sentence them to condemnation! The Jews were convinced that the Gentiles needed to repent. But the Jews were equally convinced that they themselves did not need to repent. The Jews did not understand that the real purpose of God's kindness to them was to lead them to repentance. The Jews persisted in their refusal to be led to repentance (10:21).

(T) An important truth for me is from Romans 2:5-16 about the proclamation of God's judgement on the final judgement day.

One. The final judgement day is certainly coming (5). By refusing to repent, the Jews are all the time piling up a treasure for themselves and this treasure consists of God's wrath. *God's wrath* is the just reaction and fair expression of God's justice and truth against the sins of the Jews. During the time of Paul, God was still patient with the Jews. But on the final judgement day, God will execute his stored up wrath against the unrepentant Jews, and of course, also against the unrepentant Gentiles.

Two. God's 5 criteria of judgement on the final judgement day (6-12). God's final judgement will be *universal*. He will judge all the Gentiles and all the Jews (6). God's final judgement will be *just*. He will judge each individual according to what he or she has done (6). God's final judgement will be fair. He will either reward or punish people (7-10). God's final judgement will show no favouritism. He will judge the Jews with exactly the same criteria as the Gentiles (11). And God's judgement will be absolutely reasonable. He will judge people according to how much they know about God

and God's will (12). These five criteria for God's final judgement prove that God does not favour the Jews more than any other nation on earth! The Jews have no special privileges! But also no other nation has special privileges!

Three. The final judgement day is an essential part of the proclamation of the gospel (16). God's grace does not dispense with God's judgement! The proclamation of the gospel must include the proclamation of God's grace as well as the proclamation of God's judgement!

(S) STEP 3. QUESTION

Let us try to understand all the truths in Romans 2:1-16 and ask our questions about the things we still do not understand. "Which question about anything in this passage would you like to ask to the group?" Think and write your question in your notebook. Then discuss the questions and try to find answers.

1st Question. (2:12a,14-15) What is God's criterion for judging people who live *outside* his special revelation?

(T) One. God's special revelation is contained in the Old Testament and the New Testament. During the Old Testament period, God revealed much about himself and his will through the prophets to especially Israel, but also to the Gentile nations. He especially revealed the principle of salvation by grace (Ex 20:1-2) and the principle of justification by faith (Gen 15:6). But he also revealed the law, *not as a means* to be justified, but *as the way to live* as the saved or justified people of God. During the New Testament period, God revealed himself completely in Jesus Christ and he revealed the way to live as saved and justified Christians in the writings of apostles. About two thousand years ago the majority of people who lived outside God's special revelation were in general Gentiles, but today many more Gentiles know God's special revelation than Jews do.

Two. People who sin apart from God's special revelation will also perish apart from God's special revelation. People who have never heard God's special revelation, still sin and their sin is regarded as sin in God's eyes. Because they sin, they are guilty in God's eyes and will certainly be judged by God and perish. But because they sin without knowing God's special revelation, God will not judge them according to the criteria of his special revelation! God will judge them according to their knowledge of God that they derived from the creation or moral law that is written in their hearts. And God will judge them according to how they have lived in the light of the knowledge of God's general revelation, which they possessed. They will not be judged according to any law that they did not possess. The godless and wicked cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Tyre and Sidon did not possess the Old Testament or New Testament revelations. Therefore the final judgement day will be more bearable for them than for the Jews living in the time of Jesus, who possessed the Old Testament and heard the gospel (Mt 10:15; 11:20-24).

These people will also perish apart from God's special revelation. *What God reveals in his special revelation about heaven and hell is therefore not directed to them. The only thing we can say about them is that God will judge them with absolute fairness* (Lk 12:47-48). There will be an exact correspondence between the nature of their sin and God's judgement!

2nd Question. (12b,13) What is God's criterion for judging people that are *inside* his special revelation, but who have rejected the gospel?

(S) One. People who sin under God's special revelation, will be judged by God's special revelation. At the time of Paul, the people who lived under God's special revelation and have rejected the gospel were in general the Jews. In contrast to the majority of Gentiles at that time, the Jews sinned with full knowledge of God's special revelation in the Old Testament. They will be judged in accordance with God's special revelation and this means in accordance with 3 criteria of judgement: Their works in the light of God's general revelation will judge them. Their works in the light of God's special revelation in the Old Testament (the Law and the Prophets) will judge them. They will certainly be condemned for transgressing God's laws in the Old Testament. And, if they had heard the gospel and rejected it, they will also be judged by the gospel, which they rejected. They will certainly be condemned for their unbelief (Jn 3:18).

Also with them there will be an exact correspondence between the nature of their sin and their punishment. But because they had much more knowledge of God and his will than the Gentiles did, their final judgement and punishment will be aggravated in accordance with the gravity of their sin.

Two. The criterion for judgement will not simply be knowledge, but obedience of God's special revelation. Many Jews thought that simply possession of the Old Testament revelation and knowledge of the Old Testament revelation would justify them. The Holy Book was revered, kissed, handled with respect, discussed, debated and preached in their midst. But the Jews generally neglected the most important aspect of the Book – they did not obey its contents! They did not live according to its teachings! Jesus condemned the Pharisees, because they did not practise what they preached (Mt 23:3). Like the Gentiles, the Jews will be judged according to their *deeds*, and not simply according to their *knowledge*. When Paul says, "those who obey the law will be justified", he does not imply that Jews

or anybody else could be justified on count of their obedience to the law. He does not imply that people's deeds would be weighed on the final judgement day and that some would be declared righteous by God on account of their obedience to the law. The Bible says very clearly, "*No one* will be justified by observing the law" (3:28). What Paul means is that the criterion of judgement on the final judgement day will not be what one has heard or knows about the Old Testament, but how one has lived according to the contents of the Old Testament.

3rd Question. (2:6). What is God's criterion for judging believers in Christ?

(T) One. Works will save no one, but works will judge everyone. It is important for Christians to understand that although no one will be saved according to their works, all people, including Christians, will be judged according to their works. Christians are only saved or justified *on account of God's grace and on account of Christ's completed work of salvation* for them on the cross. Christians cannot earn their justification (salvation), but they must receive their justification (salvation) by faith. However, their faith is *not the ground or reason* of their salvation or justification, but it is *the means by which* they receive salvation or justification from God!

Two. No one will be saved by a faith without works, but by a faith that bears works as a fruit. It is also important for Christians to realise that they cannot be saved or justified *by a faith that is alone*, that is, *by a faith without the specific works that belong to salvation* (cf. James 2:14-26). God's judgement will not respect merely faith or justification in the abstract. He will respect faith and justification in its relationship to all the elements that comprise the saved state. In salvation, God's grace may not be emphasised to the extent that the Christian's way of life is overlooked. Believers are not simply *saved from* evil, but also *saved to* live a life of holiness. They are not simply *saved from* a meaningless and empty life, but also *saved to* live a very meaningful and fruitful life in good works.

The criterion of what good works are, are the Ten Commandments and all the other moral teachings in the Bible. The moral law of God has not been abrogated for Christians. Although Christians are no longer "under the law" (Romans 6:14), they nevertheless are "not free from God's law, but under Christ's law" (13:8-10; 1 Cor 9:21).

The moral laws of the Bible are *not the means* of justification, but they are *the guidelines how to live* the justified or saved life as a Christian.

When Paul says, "God will give to each person according to what he has done" (6), he includes Christians. *The good works of Christians*, as the evidences of faith and salvation by grace, *are therefore the criterion of God's judgement also for the Christian*. The good works of Christians have an indispensable place in the biblical doctrine of salvation.

Three. Christians will be judged in accordance with God's special revelation and this means in accordance with 2 criteria of judgement: Above all Christians will be judged on account of their relationship to Jesus Christ. Because Christians have already been justified (saved) by God's grace through faith, on account of what Christ has done for them, they will never be condemned to the eternal fire (Jn 5:24), but will be publicly vindicated on the final judgement day (Mt 25:31-34). They will inherit the new earth together with Christ, because their names have been recorded in the Lamb's book of life. But Christians will also be judged by their works in the light of God's special revelation in the whole Bible. They will be judged according to how they have lived their justified (saved) lives. Their lives will be judged in accordance with all the moral laws in the Bible and in accordance with all the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Bible. Their works will be judged in order to test *the quality of their faith and the fruit of their salvation*. This judgement will determine their reward (cf. 1 Cor 3:12-15).

4th Question. (2:7) Why does Paul say that God will give eternal life to those who do good and who seek glory, honour, immortality and peace?

(S) No one will be saved by doing good works apart from Jesus Christ (cf. Jn 14:6)! *The good works* of verse 7 must be the opposite of *the evil works* of verse 8-9.

One. The people, who really do good works, base what they do on the truth that is revealed in the Bible (8). The wicked people are characterised by self-seeking, rejecting of the truth and following evil. Although the truth revealed in God's special revelation in the Old Testament (2:8) is much greater than his truth revealed in his creation (1:18), the wicked among the Gentiles and the wicked among the Jews have this one thing in common and that is that they both *reject the truth*! The truth is Jesus himself (Jn 14:6), the teachings of Jesus (Jn 8:31-32) and Gods' Word in general (Jn 17:17). Thus, *the good works* must include faith in Jesus Christ (Jn 6:28-29)! It is very clear that the good works of verse 7 are not any kind of good works, but good works that are completely based on the truth, that is, on the truth of God's special revelation as it is revealed in the Bible. The truth is the gospel and whatever the Bible teaches about the Christian faith and practice. Thus, the people who really do good works can only be believers in Christ. Eternal life is thus only given to believers in Jesus Christ.

Two. The people who really do good works are focussed on the future reality (7) They seek glory, honour, immortality and peace. *Glory* refers to the hope or future expectation of Christians, namely the final *transformation* of everything at the second coming of Christ (cf. 5:2; 8:17). *Honour* refers to God's *approval* of Christians in contrast to his disapproval by the ungodly and wicked people. *Immortality* refers to the *hope* of Christians in the resurrection of their bodies. *Peace* does not merely refer to peace between nations on earth, but peace in its highest sense, namely, *peace with God* (Rom 5:1). These aspirations to glory, honour, immortality and peace are the aspirations and expectations of Christians. Only Christians can have such aspirations and expectations! Only Christians can have such a hope! Thus, the people who continually seek glory, honour, immortality and peace can only be believers in Christ. They do not obtain eternal life by doing good works. Rather, their good works is an assurance to them that God has given eternal life to them.

Three. The people who really do good works, persist in doing good works (7) This perseverance and endurance of Christians is what Jesus said in Matthew 24:13, "He who stands firm to the end will be saved" (Colossians 1:22-23; Hebrews 3:14). Romans 2:7 combines the thought that "a Christian perseveres in doing good" with the thought that "a Christian aspires towards hope". By putting these two truths together, Paul emphasises that they may never be separated. Good works without seeking Christ and his reality are dead works. But seeking Christ and his reality without good works is presumption!

(T) **STEP 4 and 5. APPLY and PRAY**

After brainstorming with one another and recording a list of *possible applications*, consider which possible application God wants you to turn into a *personal application*. Then take turns to pray about one truth that God has taught you in Romans 2:1-16.

(S) **ASSIGNMENT FOR NEXT WEEK**

First. Join a house fellowship that does Bible study. Use "the five steps" Bible study method to prepare Romans 2:17-29.

Second. See the workbooks "Go and preach God's Kingdom" and Internet on www.dota.net

Third. Listen every SATURDAY to WEDNESDAY on the radio to "Discipleship training on the air".