



Pleasing God Beyond Appearances

"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Romans 2:13)

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"For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; 13 (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 14 For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15 Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;) 16 In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel. 17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and restest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, 18 And knowest his will, and approvest 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 the law. 21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? 22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? 23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? 24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. 25 For circumcision verily profiteth, 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" (Romans 2:12-29).

Introduction

The true measure of righteousness is not based on an outward show or presentation but rather it is a matter of pleasing God beyond Appearances.

The Apostle Paul, in his letter to the Romans, reminds both Jews and Gentiles that God's judgement is impartial. Whether one is under the Law of Moses or not, all are accountable to God. The Jews had the Law and the sign of circumcision; the Gentiles had the law written in their hearts. But Paul declares that outward observance, heritage, or privilege cannot save a soul. What matters is a heart that truly seeks to please God.

This message is as vital today as it was in Paul's time. Many profess Christianity outwardly but lack inward transformation. Others, though outside the faith, may live by moral conviction yet fail to know the saving grace of Christ. God calls both to repentance and sincere obedience.

Let us consider key areas both Christians and non-Christians must observe and address to please God and make heaven at last.

1. God's Judgement Is Impartial

"For there is no respect of persons with God." — Romans 2:11



God does not show partiality based on background, race, religion, or title. Whether one is a bishop, a chorister, or an atheist, God's judgement will be righteous and fair.

Paul says, "*For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law.*" (v.12). This means even those who never heard of the Law of Moses will be judged by the moral light they received through conscience and creation.

Likewise, "*as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law.*" Those who claim to know God's Word will be judged more strictly for failing to live by it.

A fair judge in a courtroom does not favour the rich over the poor. Likewise, God will not excuse sin in a preacher while condemning it in a pagan.

"For God shall bring every work into judgement, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil." — Ecclesiastes 12:14

Both believers and unbelievers must live with a consciousness that God's eyes are upon all. Christians must not presume on grace, and non-Christians must not presume that ignorance will save them.

2. Hearing God's Word Is Not Enough

"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified." — Romans 2:13

Many today take pride in attending church, owning Bibles, or quoting Scripture. Yet, as James says: "*But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.*" — James 1:22

Obedience distinguishes the true child of God from the pretender. Saul heard the commandment of the Lord to destroy Amalek, but he spared King Agag and the best of the flocks. His partial obedience led to rejection (1 Samuel 15:22–23).

A student who listens to every lecture but never studies or applies what is taught will fail the examination. In the same way, a Christian who hears sermons but does not obey God's Word will fail God's test of righteousness.

To please God, both the Christian and the unbeliever must act upon the truth they know. **Light rejected becomes darkness.**

3. Conscience Bears Witness

"Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness." — Romans 2:15

Even those who have never read the Bible often know right from wrong. This inner awareness of good and evil is the voice of conscience — God's moral compass within the human soul. But conscience can be silenced or corrupted. Paul warns of those whose conscience is "*seared with a hot iron*" (1 Timothy 4:2). When we repeatedly ignore God's promptings, our moral sensitivity dies.

A smoke alarm that is constantly ignored will eventually be switched off — but the fire still burns. In the same way, ignoring conscience does not remove guilt nor prevent the consequences.



We must keep a tender heart before God, repent quickly when convicted, and strive to maintain a clear conscience both toward God and men (Acts 24:16).

4. Outward Religion Without Inward Change Is Worthless

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit..." — Romans 2:28–29

Here Paul exposes the false confidence of those who rely on rituals. Circumcision, baptism, church membership, or titles do not make one righteous. What God seeks is *"truth in the inward parts"* (Psalm 51:6).

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy — *"This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me."* — Matthew 15:8

A tree painted green in winter may look alive, but it remains dead within. So it is with those who appear religious outwardly but lack the life of Christ within.

Let every Christian examine themselves. True Christianity begins with a heart circumcised by repentance and continues through a life led by the Spirit.

5. True Righteousness Comes Through Faith in Christ

While Paul stresses obedience and sincerity, he ultimately points us to Christ as the only source of true righteousness — *"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe."* — Romans 3:22

Moral effort alone cannot save. The Gentile's conscience, the Jew's law, and the Christian's works all fall short without Christ — *"For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."* — Romans 3:23

The good news is that through faith in Jesus, our hearts can be renewed, our sins forgiven, and the Spirit empowers us to live righteously. Just as a branch cannot bear fruit unless it abides in the vine (John 15:4–5), no one can live to please God without abiding in Christ.

Conclusion

In Romans 2:12–29, Paul reveals that God judges not by appearance but by truth. To please God and make heaven:

1. Recognise God's impartial judgement.
2. Be a doer, not merely a hearer, of His Word.
3. Keep a tender conscience before Him.
4. Seek inward transformation over outward show / presentation.
5. Place faith in Christ for true righteousness.

Let us remember the words of Micah 6:8: *"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"*

May our hearts be circumcised, our consciences alive, and our faith steadfast in Christ, so that when the righteous Judge appears, we may hear Him say, *"Well done, thou good and faithful servant... enter thou into the joy of thy lord."* (Matthew 25:21).

Amen.