



St. Paul's Lutheran Church
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The Epistle of Romans

The Justification of the Ungodly

Chapter 2 Verses 25-29

When the Apostle Paul uses the word, "Law," he uses it in reference to all the Law in the Old Testament. In other words, the Law is God's will for mankind. Keep in mind, though, that this Law of God is also found in the New Testament. *(We are not dispensationalists who naïve believe that the Old Testament is Law and the New Testament is Gospel.)* And so, there is both Law and Gospel in the Old and New Testaments – because all of scripture has the same author.

Now, regarding verses 25-29, when Paul talks about the circumcised, he is referring to individuals who see themselves in the same socio-religious category. In other words, these circumcised are the ones living by means of the Law for a right relationship with God. While this seems good on the surface, the problem with living by means of the Law is that 'no one' can keep the Law perfectly. But why?

The Law is not bad; it is good. The problem is that the old Adam abuses the Law, along with help from the evil one. Both the old Adam and the evil one misuse the Law

and blind the person to accomplish self-righteousness. For example, the old Adam and the evil one twist the Law ever so slightly to give the impression that we are successfully fulfilling the Law. And the Laws of God that we are not fulfilling? Well, the old Adam and the evil one surely do not bring these up for us to see but hide them from us. As a result, we become prideful – we are the circumcised who follow God's Laws! We are not like those filthy rejects – the uncircumcised who break God's Laws. And so, we become confident in our relationship with God based on our status, workings, and accomplishments. If we feel inadequate, we can simply look at all the scum in the world who aren't even trying to uphold God's Law, and we quickly realize that God is lucky to have us and that more people should be like us.

The problem with being the circumcised (living by means of the Law) is that we are rejecting the Gospel – or marginalizing it at best.

You see, if salvation could be by the works of the Law – to be like the circumcised – we would not need Jesus. However, the fact is that we have broken God's Law. No matter how churchy we are and no matter how many 'T's' we cross and 'I's' we dot, the Law brings us no advantage before God because "no-one" has faithfully kept the whole Law. We all fall short; we are all sinners in thought, word, and deed.

So, is the Law not beneficial? Of course not! The Law is Good. The Law curbs us from doing stupid stuff to ourselves and others. The Law shows us God's good and perfect will. And the Law works to show us our sin. But the Law cannot advance us towards God – as if we are climbing on a ladder upward to God. The Law does not give us a head start or an advantage in escaping God's wrath. It is no advantage to us in establishing, sustaining, and preserving us with the Lord because we are sinners. Sinners cannot 'do' the Law. Sinners need something to be done to them. Sinners need Jesus who did the Law and died for the sinner's forgiveness.

What this means is that this life under the sun is a challenge. It is a challenge because we want to live by means of the Law – it is what makes sense to us. We like to think that we can do it! However, this way of thinking is the way of the old Adam and the Devil. But we do not belong to the Devil, and our old Adam is dying daily! We belong to the kingdom of God. Therefore, this life under the sun is one of transition – we still have this old Adam and yet the new man. We live in this vale of tears, and yet we are citizens of the kingdom of God. Sin still terrorizes us, and yet we have the Holy Spirit. We are dying, and yet we have eternal life. We constantly fail under the Law, and yet we are declared righteous in Jesus. Thus the life of a Christian! The life that Paul describes later on in Romans.



