Bible reading: Romans 2:17-29

Are you circumcised?

Book of Romans is like a treasure in the Bible. Innumerable commentaries had been written and still writing. It played a major role in the making of the history of the church. It has influenced many great men of God like St Augustine, Martin Luther (v1:17 righteous will live by faith), John Wesley and others, paved way for their transformation. William Tyndale stated that the more we study the epistle of Romans, the more pleasurable it becomes. Personally speaking, during my younger days I would not attempt to read Romans because it was hard for me to understand. But I’m finding it a joy to explore it these days.

A secular thinker once wrote that man was born free, but everywhere he is in chains now. The beauty of the book of Romans is that it reverses it and portrays the real picture of humanity and reveals that man was born in chains but the truth shall set him free. Jesus has freed us from the separation and alienation from God due to our sinful nature and bondages of decay, and reconciled us to Him. **An experience of redemption**.

After addressing sinfulness of humanity, God’s wrath and God’s righteous judgment in first and second chapters (1:1- 2:16) in the context of describing the fate of unbelieving and pagan Gentiles, Paul now turn towards the religiously privileged Jews, in his attempt to state that all stand guilty before God. Jews carried the pride that they were the chosen people and were given the law directly by God. Despite their knowledge of God’s will, they are guilty because they too have refused to live by their beliefs. We, sometimes, get into the same trap of boasting about our traditions and ancestral ties, glory and accomplishments.

V21, 22 Paul explained to the Jews that they needed to **teach themselves**, not others, by their law. They knew the law so well that they had learned how to excuse their own actions while criticizing others. It is a reminder that we cannot please God without a proper relationship to Him.

V21-27 These verses are a scathing criticism of **hypocrisy**. It is much easier to tell others how to behave than to behave properly ourselves. It is easier to say the right words than to allow them to take root in our lives. Make sure our actions matches our words.

V24 If we claim to be one of God’s people, our life should reflect what God is like. What do people think about God from watching our life?

V25-29 **Circumcision** refers to the sign of God’s special covenant with his people (Jews). According to Paul, being circumcised (Jews) meant nothing if the person didn’t obey God’s laws. On the other hand the uncircumcised (Gentiles) would receive God’s love and approval if they kept the law’s requirements. Paul goes on to explain that a real Jew (one who pleases God) is not someone who has been circumcised (a Jew “outwardly”) but someone whose heart is right with God and obeys him (a Jew “inwardly”).

In conclusion, Paul made it clear that membership in God’s family is based on **internal**, not external, **qualities**. Attending church or being baptized, confirmed or accepted for membership is not enough, just as submitting to circumcision was not enough for the Jews. God desires our heartfelt devotion and obedience (see Deuteronomy 10:16, Jeremiah 4:4 for “circumcision of heart”). Obedience is better than sacrifice.