

The Book of Romans
2:17-29
9/26/2018 Wednesday PM

Romans 2:17-29

¹⁷Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; ¹⁸if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; ¹⁹if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, ²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—

²¹you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? ²²You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

²⁵Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. ²⁶If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? ²⁷The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker. ²⁸A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

Vv. 17-20

- In these verses, Paul lays out nine privileges the Jews enjoy.
 1. **They possess the name “Jew” (Greek *Ioudaios*). (v.17)**
 - This first privilege is also the most general.
 - The term *Jew* originally referred to a person from the region occupied by the descendants of Judah, but it was applied generally to Israelite people after the Exile.
 - The name signified that the person belonged to that people, distinct from all others, that God had chosen to be his own.
 2. **They “rely on the law.” (v.17)**
 - The law is specifically the law of Moses, the Torah.
 - Since they were the people God gave the law to, they tended to rely on it for deliverance from judgement.
 - **Michah 3:11** says, “Yet they lean upon the LORD and say, ‘Is not the LORD among us? No disaster will come upon us.’” This was after Micah had just rebuked the people for their sin.
 3. **They “brag about their relationship to God.” (v.17)**
 - The Greek word for “brag” here is *kauchaomai* and is perhaps better translated “boast.”
 - This is not necessarily wrong for them to do.
 - **1 Corinthians 1:31** says, “Therefore, as it is written: "Let him who boasts boast in the Lord."”
 4. **They know God’s will (v.18).**
 - **Romans 1:19** says, “since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.”
 - All people have a knowledge about God, in this verse Paul is specifically including the Jews.
 5. **They “approve of what is superior.” (v.18)**
 - This can also be translated, “distinguish the things that really matter.”
 - The point is that the Jews are able to discern right from wrong. They use the law to do this.
 6. **They are “a guide for the blind” (v.19)**
 7. **They are a “light for those who are in the dark” (v.19)**
 - Both 6 and 7 are two ways of saying the same things.
 - As a natural outcome of the Jews’ knowledge of God through the law, they are in a position to help others understand the truth about God.
 - In Matthew 15:14 Jesus called the leaders “blind guides.” Paul’s usage here isn’t negative.
 8. **They are “instructors of the foolish.” (v.20)**
 9. **They are “teachers of infants.” (v.20)**
 - These two also say the same thing as the other.
 - The word “Foolish” in this verse is the Greek word *aphron* and it is not to be taken negatively.

- Here it refers to Gentiles as people who, without detailed knowledge of God and His Word, inevitably fall into wrong forms of worship and behavior as **Romans 1:22** suggests.
- Similarly, the Jews looked at the Gentiles as “infants” in terms of their religious sensibilities.

Vv.21-24

- In these verses Paul is highlighting the difference between claim and reality.
- In vv. 17-20 he was building them up, showing them what they had to be proud of.
- Here he begins to lay the punches.
- The Jews thought too highly of themselves, and Paul sought to bring them down a level or two.

Vv.25-29

- V. 25 - Circumcision was the most important distinguishing mark of Jewishness along with the Law. (**Genesis 17:9-14**)
- Paul discusses it here to further erode the Jews’ confidence in their inherited religious advantages.
- It was a physical reminder to Jews of their national heritage and privilege.
- Many of the Jews were confident that it sealed their position with God.
- What Paul is seeking to teach these Jews is that circumcision was only worthwhile if God’s law was followed. (**Galatians 5:3**)
- The symbol means nothing, if the reality it represents is not there. This is like signing a contract but never carrying it out.
- **V.26** – Paul made it clear that circumcision was a valuable part of the Jewish culture.
- It is only where there is no obedience that circumcision was of no value.
- By that same logic, when obedience was present, the real objective was accomplished, even though circumcision had not occurred.
- A Gentile who kept the law’s requirements was as good in God’s sight as a law-abiding, circumcised Jew.
- **V.27** – A Gentile that kept the law would be in a position to condemn a Jew who broke it, no matter how well that Jew knew the law.
- It all boils down to the fact that more importance should be placed on doing the law, rather they just knowing it.
- **V.28** – Circumcision was never taught as something strictly external. It was also a matter of the heart:
 - **Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6**
 - **Jeremiah 4:4**
 - **Ezekiel 36:26-27**
 - **Galatians 6:15**
- **V. 29** – The kind of Jews God wanted were not those people tied to a heritage, but a people whose lives were pleasing to Him.
- The same is true for us today, we cannot think about the title Christian and thing that in and of itself means anything.
- Can the people that we say that to see us act in that manner.
- More importantly, does God witness our action and see that they line up with what our label is?

Next Week Study Romans 3:1-8