

Parson to Person
ROMANS 2 PART 2

“Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, ‘Do not commit adultery,’ do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For ‘the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,’ as it is written.

For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God” (Romans 2:17–29 NKJV).

As mentioned in Romans 2:1, the Jews being addressed were identified in the singular “you.” This indicated that Paul was intending a personal application within the “all” of those addresses. There were none within the group who were without sin, and therefore none were able to escape the application.

By addressing the Jews this way, a personal application and examination was inescapable. “All” are guilty of sin. “All” are in need of a savior. The method Paul employed did not suggest that “all” were guilty of the same things (as the singular indicated); nonetheless, as indicated by the whole of chapters 2-3, Paul did build a case against “all” men, thereby showing that “all” are sinners—not just the Jew, but the Gentiles too!

In this section we see that Paul had hypocrisy and spiritual arrogance in his sights. He pointed out that an outward show of religion was insufficient, and demanded that those in his audience humble themselves and recognize the fact that they were no better off than the others they were condemning. They, like those around them, needed mercy and forgiveness. Therefore, Paul “laid the axe at the root” of the spiritual pride manifested in the Jew first—then also in the Gentile.

The Jews had/have been privileged with the covenants, the promises, the blessings, and the Law. Therefore, they saw themselves as better than the Gentiles—but they were not! Their outward show of religion was no substitute for the true inner workings of the Spirit.

Paul showed these Jews that some who had no “sign” of the covenant visible in their flesh may be nonetheless in better standing before the Lord than those who did. He asked, “*will not [their] uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?*”, thereby pointing out that having the genuine fruit of that “sign” manifested in their hearts was greater than simply being circumcised in the flesh.

This fact did not suggest that circumcision was wrong or insignificant. However, it did indeed point out that the outward actions of the Jew had no real meaning if not manifested in and by the heart.

Christians should take heed herein: An outward show of religion and/or religious activity requires the same address. The circumcised Jews who felt justified by simply being marked with the sign of the covenant are no different than the unregenerated “Christian” who wears the badge of water baptism, church attendance, tithing, serving, etc. If religious activity (as good as it may be) flows from self-confidence and pride rather than from genuine humility and salvation, it falls far short of what God intends for His own.

I love you all, Pastor Paul