

Sermon #6, Romans 2:17-29
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Turn with me in your Bibles this morning please once again to the Book of Romans. We'll be taking up our study today in Romans 2: vv. 17-27. Before we do that, it is important for the sake of continuity and a fuller understanding of what we will study today, that I remind us of what we have already learned from this book in our previous 5 sermons.

The theme of the Book of Romans is the GOOD NEWS of GOD. 6 times in Romans 1: vv. 1-17, Paul uses the word, "gospel" (vv. 1, 2, 9, 15, 16, 17). The word "gospel" means "good news."

And from those 6 verses in Romans 1, Paul gives us 5 very important pieces of information about the gospel.

1.) In Romans 1:1, Paul tells us that the "good news" that he is talking about, whatever it is, is good news that originates, belongs to and comes to us from God.

V. 1, "Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God."

2.) In vv. 2-3, Paul tells us that the "gospel", this "good news" from God, whatever it is, centers around God's Son, Jesus Christ.

Vv. 2-3, "The gospel he (God) promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures regarding his Son . . ."

3.) In vv. 14-15, Paul tells us that this "good news" from God, whatever it is, is for all races and classes of people.

Vv. 14-15, "I am obligated both to Greeks and non-Greeks, both to the wise and the foolish. That is why I am so eager to preach the gospel also to you who are at Rome."

4.) In v. 16, Paul tells us that the "good news of God", whatever it is, is the "explosive power of God" to bring God's salvation to any person.

V. 16, "I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile."

5.) In v. 17, Paul tells us that in this good news from God, whatever it is, a "righteousness from God" is revealed/make known.

V. 17, "For in the gospel, a righteousness from God is revealed."

And as you read those passages, you wait and wait and you say, Paul tell me what is this good news. You've told me that God has some good news for the human race; you've told me that the good news centers around His Son, Jesus; you've told me that the good news is for all races and classes of people; you've told me that this good news is God's power for bringing salvation to all people; and Paul, you've told me that in this gospel we receive God's righteousness. But Paul, you haven't yet told me what this good news is. And Paul doesn't. He drops all these hints and tidbits of information, but he doesn't tell us clearly and fully what this good news is. Until you get to Chapter 3: vv. 21-26.

From Romans 1:18 through 3:20, a span of 64 verses, Paul takes a lengthy detour from talking about the good news to talking about why the entire human race needs to hear and receive God's good news. From Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul is going to show that the entire human race, including every person in it, is under God's wrath because of sin. God is angry with every person and every person will ultimately perish in hell due to his and her sin, unless they respond to God's good news.

Now here is how Paul breaks down Romans 1:18-3:20.

1.) In Romans 1:18-32, Paul shows that the entire Gentile world is guilty of many, many sins and therefore God is angry with them. As we have seen in past sermons, Paul lists sins that the Gentiles have committed against God and against their fellow man. SHOW PP.

2.) In Romans 2:1-3 addresses the self-righteous person who reads Romans 1 and thinks of everyone else, but not himself. And Paul tells such a person that God is angry with him and that he or she will also ultimately be judged by God and perish in hell for their sins (2: vv. 8, 9, 12).

3.) And now that brings us to the text that we will look at today, Romans 2:17-27, and in this text, Paul is going to tell us that the Jews, that race of people who were God's elect, God's chosen, in the Old Testament dispensation, they too need to hear and receive God's good news, for they too lack righteousness; they too are sinners before God.

Now there is some historical information that you need to know about the race of people known as Hebrews or Jews. Throughout the OT Dispensation and right on into the NT, because the Jews had been chosen by God from among all the nations on the face of the earth to be His special people, because they had been given a written revelation from God, because they were the descendents of the Patriarchs (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), they developed an elitist, prima donna attitude that turned into a snobbishness toward all Gentiles, all other nations. Instead of giving glory to God for God calling them to be His people and instead of thanking God for the privileges and advantages that He had blessed them with, and instead of adhering to the written revelation that God had given to them, the Jews gave glory to themselves and they mistook all of God's blessings to them for the right to live as they pleased, thinking all the while that God had so blessed them that they were accepted by God no matter what they did or how they lived.

So in vv. 17-20, Paul rehearses at least 5 privileges/advantages in which the Jews of Paul's day boasted (bragged about-see vs. 17c and 23) that God had blessed them uniquely.

5 Advantages/Privileges That Jews Gloated In (2:17-20):

V. 17,

- “Now you, if you call yourself a Jew;
- if you rely on the law
- and brag about your relationship to God;

V. 18,

- if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law;

V. 19,

- if you are convinced that you are:
 - a guide for the blind,
 - a light for those who are in the dark,
 - an instructor of the foolish (v. 20),
 - a teacher of infants,because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth-

5 Questions From Paul to the Jews (2:21-23):

V. 21,

- you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?
- You who preach against stealing, do you steal?

V. 22,

- You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?
- You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

V. 23,

- You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?

Paul's Damning Indictment of the Jews ALSO from God's Written Revelation To Them (2:24).

V. 24,

- As it is written: God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

There was a sharp contrast between what the Jews claimed to believe (their doctrine) and how they lived and behaved. Jesus, who was Himself a Jew, repeatedly taught while on earth that the practice and lifestyle of the Jews was not in keeping with their teaching and therefore not in harmony with God's holy law as found in Scripture (Matt. 5:19-20; Matt. 23; Mk. 7:9-13; Lk. 11:37-52). In Jesus' mind there was a sharp contrast between doctrine and life in the Jewish people.

"The conclusion which Paul draws from this damning indictment is that the religious perversity of the Jew caused the Gentiles to blaspheme the name of God, for they judged the character of the Deity by the conduct of those who claimed to be his people." (Geoff Wilson)

"Unbelievers who have ample opportunity to observe the sins which are committed by professors are not thereby encouraged to assume the mantle of true religion themselves." (Geoff Wilson)

"The Gentiles reasoned in this way, "The Jews behave wickedly, therefore their God must be wicked God because people reflect and resemble what they believe about their God."

1.) V. 17a, "Now you, if you call yourself a Jew;"

"I am a Jew. I am a descendent of Abraham and Judah. The word, "Jew" means praise or praised. And the Jews praised themselves for being Jews and they looked down their noses at others who were of their race. They referred to them as "dogs."

Jews bore their name proudly because they considered it a title of honor that identified them as the people of God. He could trace his physical descent from Abraham and he rested in this relationship. (see Matt. 3:9; Jn. 8:39). They thought because they were Jews, they were better than all other races of people. As a Jew, he was a member of the chosen race. Deut. 10:15, "Yet the LORD set his affection on your forefathers and loved them, and he chose you, their descendents, above all the nations, as it is today."

2.) V. 17b, ". . . if you rely on the law . . ."

The Jew rested upon the law confident that his salvation was assured because God had given them His Word. Some Jews believed that the mere possession of the Law guaranteed their security and favor with God. Other Jews believed that by means of strenuous effort to obey the law, they could earn salvation. The Jew trusted in the law of Moses. The Jew looked for his deliverance in the Law, but in reality the law sealed his doom (Rom. 5:20, 10:5; Gal. 3:19-22).

3.) V. 17c, ". . . ;And brag about your relationship to God;"

Jews believed that just because God had given to them His law and they had been instructed in it, their salvation with God was secured as well as their superiority to all other nations.

4.) V. 18a, ". . . if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law;"

5.) Vv. 19-20, ". . . if you are convinced that you are-

-a guide for the blind,

-a light for those who are in the dark

-an instructor of the foolish,

-a teacher of infants

because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth . . ."

Summation: Although the Jews were uniquely privileged, enjoying advantages above all others, they did not seem to realize that these blessings implied obligations.

William Hendriksen said that Paul is saying, "If you present yourself as a person who relies on God and his law, and even teach others the meaning of this law and impress upon them that they should live in harmony with it, how is it that you yourself do not practice what you preach?" If you think you are really so learned and wise and capable, is it not high time that you begin to examine yourself?"

The Jew transferred to himself the glory that belonged to God alone.
The Jew was instructed in God's written word from childhood.

-Vs. 21. Paul compares the profession of the Jew with his practice. In teaching others, the Jew had failed to teach himself.

For showing that the Jew was guilty of theft, see Ps. 50:16-23.

Deut. 7:25ff God forbade the Jews to covet the gold and silver that made up the false gods of the heathen.

Jesus, who was Himself a Jew, repeatedly taught while on earth that the practice and lifestyle of the Jews was not in keeping with their teaching and therefore not in harmony with God's holy law as found in Scripture (Matt. 5:19-20; Matt. 23; Mk. 7:9-13; Lk. 11:37-52). In Jesus' mind there was a sharp contrast between doctrine and life in the Jewish people.

-Vs. 25, "

Paul is saying that circumcision has value if you keep the law, but no value if you break it. The purpose of circumcision was to be a sign and seal of what the Jew believed. In parents circumcising their children, the parents were saying that in raising our children, we commit ourselves to instruct them in the ways of God so that they will follow God all the days of their lives. Circumcision was the sign that the sin nature that was passed along through sexual union was being broken. But when a Jew lived and behaved sinfully, the sign and seal lost its meaning Paul is saying.

-Paul is saying that no ground on which the Jew based his sense of security in eternal salvation was sufficient.

-What Paul is showing in this section is this: Apart from the righteousness freely granted by God, no one can ever attain to the state of righteousness necessary to be accepted by God (see Rom. 1:17; 3:21-24; 5:1).

-Vs. 27, "And though circumcision, like the New Testament ordinances of Baptism and the Lord's Supper, was of divine appointment, yet there was no value in the outward and visible sign unless it was accompanied by inward and spiritual grace." Geoff Wilson

-Vs. 29, The word, "Jew" means praise.

Matthew Henry says, "He is not a Christian, that is one outwardly, nor is that baptism, which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Christian, that is one inwardly, and baptism is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of me, but of God."

And the 5 advantages that the Jews boasted of are as follows:

1.) The Jews of Paul's day boasted in the racial heritage, believing that it made them superior to all other nations. The Jews failed to give glory to God that He had made them Jews.

2.) The Jews of Paul's day boasted in that they had written revelation (the OT Scriptures) from God, while other nations had not been given written revelation from God. But the Jews failed to govern their lives by this written revelation.

3.) The Jews of Paul's day boasted that as descendents of Abraham, they enjoyed a relationship to the true God, that other nations did not have. Yet the Jews did not honor the true God.

4.) The Jews of Paul's day boasted in their intellectual superiority to other nations, but they did not acknowledge that God's written revelation to them had given them their intellectual advantages.

5.) The Jews of Paul's day boasted in their flesh. The sign of being a Jew was circumcision and they took great pride in this sign.