

The Danger of Word and Sacrament

Romans, Part XI

Romans 2:17-29

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I. God's Righteousness

II. You are called a Jew

A. But, Paul, we have the law! (17-24)

¹⁷Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God, ¹⁸and know His will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law, ¹⁹and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law. ²¹You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? ²²You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? ²⁴For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written.

1. Advantages of being Jewish (17-20)

Paul's Jewish opponents would object to the way Paul lumped Jews and Gentiles together in 2:1-16. Paul responds, first, by acknowledging the advantages of being Jewish. All these privileges have their foundation in the OT. Israel was to be all these things.

2. Unfaithfulness of the Jewish people (21-24 cf. Is 52:5; Dt 10:12-22; Acts 7:51-53)

So how could Paul possibly say that God would judge the Jews? Because the history of Israel revealed repeatedly that they were _____ to their calling. As Stephen spoke:

⁵¹"You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. ⁵²Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, ⁵³who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it." (Acts 7:51-53)

B. But, Paul, we have circumcision! (25-29)

²⁵For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. ²⁶Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? ²⁷And 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? ²⁸For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; ²⁹but 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.

1. Circumcision and obedience (25-27)

2. Circumcision and Jewish Identity (28-29)

Paul insists that possessing the external marks of a Jew is a pale substitute for having the reality. With whom is God really pleased? With those who love him from the heart and obey His Word not with those who have an altered male reproductive organ and disobey His law.

An Outline of Romans

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III. The Danger of Word and Sacrament

A. Do not think in your heart (Dt 9:1-6 cf. 31:24-29; Jer 7:1-28)

¹*Hear, O Israel: You are to cross over the Jordan today, and go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than yourself, cities great and fortified up to heaven, ²a people great and tall, the descendants of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you heard it said, 'Who can stand before the descendants of Anak?' ³Therefore understand today that the LORD your God is He who goes over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and bring them down before you; so you shall drive them out and destroy them quickly, as the LORD has said to you. ⁴'Do not think in your heart, after the LORD your God has cast them out before you, saying, 'Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land'; but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD is driving them out from before you. ⁵It is not because of your righteousness or the uprightness of your heart that you go in to possess their land, but because of the wickedness of these nations that the LORD your God drives them out from before you, and that He may fulfill the word which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. ⁶Therefore understand that the LORD your God is not giving you this good land to possess because of your righteousness, for you are a stiff-necked people. (Dt 9:1-6)*

Moses emphasizes that what differentiated Jews from Gentiles was not something in the Jews themselves. *Like a consuming fire*, God was going to use Israel to drive the Canaanites out of the land (3). But He wasn't using Israel because of Israel's _____ (5b). Like the Gentiles, the Israelites were a *stiff-necked, rebellious people* (6). Only God's mercy distinguished them.

B. A Parable of Two Sons (Mt 21:28-32 cf. 23:1-36; Prov 17:2)

²⁸*"But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard.' ²⁹He answered and said, 'I will not,' but afterward he regretted it and went. ³⁰Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I go, sir,' but he did not go. ³¹Which of the two did the will of his father?" They said to Him, "The first." Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you. ³²For John came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw it, you did not afterward relent and believe him. (Mt 21:28-32)*

Solomon once declared, "*A wise servant will rule over a _____ who causes shame, and will share an inheritance among the brothers*" (Prov 17:2). The majority of the Jews rejected their own Messiah, and revealed, thereby, their hatred for God and for His law. They neglected the heart of the _____ while boasting in their possession of the law. Likewise, they neglected the meaning of _____ while boasting in their possession of circumcision.

²⁵*"Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised—
²⁶Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart."*

C. With most of them God was not well pleased (1 Cor 10:1-11)

¹*Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, ²all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, [baptism] ³all ate the same spiritual food, ⁴and all drank the same spiritual drink [supper]. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. ⁵But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. ⁶Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. ⁷And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." ⁸Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; ⁹nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; ¹⁰nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. ¹¹Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition [Word], upon whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Cor 10:1-11)*

Paul reminds us that it is easy for the people of God to put their confidence in the wrong thing. Word and sacrament can become an _____. Why? Because they're bad? Absolutely not! Because we are bad. Our hearts are desperately wicked.

IV. Conclusion