

ROMANS

KNOW THE TRUTH

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SERMON: Changed Hearts Seek Praise from God

SCRIPTURE: Romans 2:17-29

SUMMARY: You are not right with God because of your ancestry or because you know God's law or even because you have been baptized and have membership in a local church; you are right with God when your heart is right with Him! When your heart is right with God, you seek praise from Him and not from people. Paul goes to great lengths to bring Jewish believers into the reality of a new relationship with every non-Jew and ultimately into a right understanding of their relationship with God. A right relationship with God and others begins and continues with a changed heart!

READ:

ROMANS 2:17-24

17 You who call yourselves Jews are relying on God's law, and you boast about your special relationship with him. 18 You know what he wants; you know what is right because you have been taught his law. 19 You are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for people who are lost in darkness. 20 You think you can instruct the ignorant and teach children the ways of God. For you are certain that God's law gives you complete knowledge and truth.

21 Well then, if you teach others, why don't you teach yourself? You tell others not to steal, but do you steal? 22 You say it is wrong to commit adultery, but do you commit adultery? You condemn idolatry, but do you use items stolen from pagan temples? 23 You are so proud of knowing the law, but you dishonor God by breaking it. 24 No wonder the Scriptures say, "The Gentiles blaspheme the name of God because of you."

I. OBEDIENCE BEGINS IN THE MIRROR.

(Not binoculars, microscopes or telescopes.)

MATTHEW 7:21-23

“Not everyone who calls out to me, ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Only those who actually do the will of my Father in heaven will enter. On judgment day many will say to me, ‘Lord! Lord! We prophesied in your name and cast out demons in your name and performed many miracles in your name.’ But I will reply, ‘I never knew you. Get away from me, you who break God’s laws.’

READ:

ROMANS 2:25-27

The Jewish ceremony of circumcision has value only if you obey God’s law. But if you don’t obey God’s law, you are no better off than an uncircumcised Gentile. And if the Gentiles obey God’s law, won’t God declare them to be his own people? In fact, uncircumcised Gentiles who keep God’s law will condemn you Jews who are circumcised and possess God’s law but don’t obey it.

II. A TRUE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD TRUMPS A FAKE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD!

READ:

ROMANS 2:28-29

For you are not a true Jew just because you were born of Jewish parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of circumcision. No, a true Jew is one whose heart is right with God. And true circumcision is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.

III. A TRUE CHRISTIAN DOES NOT BECOME SO BY BIRTH OR CEREMONY.

- A. A True Christian is one whose heart is right with God!
- B. A True Christian is one whose heart has been changed by the Spirit!
- C. A True Christian is one who seeks praise from God, not from people!

LIFE APPLICATION SERMON GUIDE

1. Jews are not right with God because they are Jews. Paul draws them in praising their knowledge of the law and then challenges them with their practice of breaking the law. How bothered are you by those who do not practice what they preach/teach?
2. Paul is writing to the church. He wants Jews to recognize they are no better than the Gentiles. Do some Christians in the church today look down on others in the church? Why? In what ways? How do we guard against looking down on others?
3. If you substitute Christian for Jew in this passage you may come to a clearer understanding of possible applications in the 21st century. Read verse 27 again. And then read this paraphrase, “Unbelievers who strive to keep God’s word will condemn you Christians who are baptized and possess God’s word but don’t obey it!” What accusations and challenges are included in Romans 2:17-24 and verse 27 for Christians today?
4. Read Ezekiel 11:19-21. What comparisons can you draw from Ezekiel’s words and Paul’s words in Romans 2:17-24, 28-29?
5. Read this paraphrase of verses 28-29, “You are not a true Christian just because you were born of Christian parents or because you have gone through the ceremony of baptism. No, a true Christian is one whose heart is right with God. And a true baptism is not merely obeying the letter of the law; rather, it is a change of heart produced by the Spirit. And a person with a changed heart seeks praise from God, not from people.” WOW! Do you have a changed heart? How do you know? How would others know?
6. What does it mean to seek praise from God and not from people (verse 29)?
7. There is a beautiful crescendo through these verses that would surely have drawn in both the Jewish and Gentile readers. It is essential to note that these two groups in the church in Rome were Paul’s primary audience for these truths. It is also true that God can lead us into His truth for us today through Paul’s words with the guidance of the Holy Spirit. With that in mind, what truths have you learned from these verses and how will you strive to live them out?
8. PRAY: Ask the Lord to fill your life and our church with believers who have received a changed heart from the Lord! Ask the Lord to strengthen your relationship with Him so that you will become the right influencer both in the church and in the world.