

The Jews and Circumcision
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Text: Romans 2:25-29

Romans: [Bibliography](#) or [Manuscripts and Greek Exegesis](#)

UBS 4th Edition Paragraph Topic: The Jews and the Law

Central Idea of Message: Outward signs of religion are of no value by themselves. Inward faith is the principal test for all who claim to be in covenant relationship with God.

Introduction: In previous passages, the apostle Paul has argued that God communicates with mankind through three different mediums: conscience, creation, and Scripture. In this short section, Paul explains the significance of circumcision and defines what it means to be a real Jew. For Christians today, Paul's inspired words provide an analogy of what it means to be an authentic child of God.

- I. Genuine Circumcision (vv. 25-27)
 - A. Circumcision (v. 25)
 - 1. Circumcision is of value if the law is practiced
 - a) **Circumcision was simply the seal of the covenant relation of Israel with God (Gen. 17:10-11; cf. Robertson 4:340)**
 - b) An assurance signaling that the male child belonged to the race which was the heir of God's promises (cf. Wuest 2:49)
 - c) To be administered to all male babies on the eighth day after birth (Gen. 17:12; Lev. 12:3;
<https://bibleapologetics.org/circumcision-why-the-eight-day/>)
 - (1) Necessary level of vitamin K and peak of Prothrombin, both necessary for clotting
 - (2) Today vitamin K is given to baby boys circumcised before the eighth day to help with blood clotting
 - d) Thought by some to have absolute salvific value
 - e) Considered by some to be the supreme shield

against the dangers of Gehenna (cf. Moody 177)

- f) **Infant baptism may trace its origin to infant circumcision, whereby some have wrongly taught that this rite imparts saving efficacy, but it does not**
2. Circumcision is of no value if the law is not kept
 - a) "Circumcision proves that a person did not act out of ignorance when they transgressed; they knew the requirements of the law and still broke it" (*Faithlife* Rom. 2:25)
 - b) The boys learned from their parents what circumcision meant (belonging to the covenant community of Yahweh)
 - c) Heathen neighbors of Israel practiced circumcision too, but did not have the same meaning as Israel's rite (cf. Boa 84)
 - d) **Obvious is the fact that outward signs and rituals can neither save nor protect from judgment**
 - e) Form without substance is meaningless
 - f) Much like water baptism today
 - (1) Visible testimony to an invisible cleansing, not the spiritual cleansing itself
 - (2) Outer witness to an inner conversion
- B. Relationship with God has always been available to every person, not just the Jews (v. 26)
1. Outer signs and rituals are eliminated as vehicles of salvation
 2. **The law is a schoolmaster to teach us our need for a savior by demonstrating the impossibility of keeping every bit of it (cf. Gal. 3:24)**
 3. Those who are physically uncircumcised but keep the law which has been revealed to them can by faith become the people of God (cf. Rom. 1:17)
 - a) **Substance (faith in God and obedience to revealed light) without form (codified rules) is acceptable to God, thus emphasizing reality over ritual**
 - b) **Form without substance is meaningless, since it is merely ritual without reality**
 - c) Salvation is by grace through faith, not by keeping any law, yet, the revelation of law necessarily evokes faith in the lawgiver

- C. Uncircumcision is counted as circumcision (v. 27)
1. **"An obedient Gentile with no circumcision would be more acceptable than a disobedient Jew with circumcision" (Wiersbe, Exposition, 1:521)**
 2. God evaluates based upon one's faith
 - a) Genuine faith always surfaces as obedience
 - b) **Knowing the letter of the law brings greater accountability because people who know better are expected to do better**
 3. One can be enlightened but remain unsaved, thus enlightenment does not constitute salvation
 - a) Possess law
 - b) Possess lineage
 - c) Possess covenant promises
 - d) Possess physical circumcision
 - e) Yet had never laid hold of the reality of being in personal relationship with God through faith
 4. In order for circumcision to indicate righteousness, one would need to be fulfilling continually the demands of the law from the beginning of accountability to the very end of life, which is a virtually impossible task achieved by nobody but Jesus (Rom. 3:23; 6:23)

II. Genuine Jew (vv. 28-29)

- A. Not by outward appearance (v. 28)
 1. Outward circumcision is meaningless without faith (Gal. 5:6)
 2. Outward circumcision is insignificant unless one is a new creation (Gal. 6:15)
- B. By inward commitment (v. 29)
 1. Nobody is born a believer
 2. Parents could decide on circumcision but that is not what God was looking for
 3. The Bible's emphasis is on having a heart wherein the excess flesh of the world has been cut away by God's Spirit
 4. **The Holy Spirit performs the procedure of circumcising the heart in response to one's faith and repentance (cf. 2 Cor. 3:3, 6; Eph. 2:11; Phil. 3:3; Col. 2:11)**
 5. God accepts all who have faith (cf. Moody 178)
 6. Paul was saying that a real Jew is one whose praise is not from men but from God

7. **Belief is required before the seal is valid: circumcision was the *form* of the seal, faith is the *substance* of the seal (cf. McBeth 86)**
8. Human nature must be circumcised
 - a) **Sin must be uprooted, not pruned (cf. McBeth 99)**
 - b) **Our nature must be changed on the inside, not merely whitewashed on the outside, and only the Holy Spirit can do this triggered by our repenting of sin and placing faith in Christ**
9. There is no room for honor from mankind because of works
 - a) Praise goes to God
 - b) The honor of salvation is bestowed by God to the person of faith

Conclusion: In Romans 1, Paul explained that the Gentile world was without excuse for not worshiping and obeying the one, biblical, triune God.

In Romans 2, Paul explained that the Jewish world was without excuse for not worshiping and obeying the one, biblical, triune God.

In Romans 3, Paul will expand this same argument to include all people, everywhere, at all times.

Right standing with God is not of man's achievement, nor can salvation be obtained through human rituals. Salvation is strictly found in man's humble repentance and response of faith to God's gracious love demonstrated in Jesus Christ. Hymn #382, "My Faith Looks Up to Thee."