

RELIGION CAN'T SAVE YOU

Romans 2:17~29, part 1

Illustration... On a marker board, list “*characteristics*” that describe **A Policeman**. (*Donuts, ha, ha*)

Whether or not a man is a policeman, is not determined by any of these things... A policeman is one who is a policeman in the heart.

- He has a love for Justice...
- He enjoys helping people...
- He has faith in the judicial system...

Those are the “*True Characteristics*” that describe a policeman...

Because truth is, not everyone who wears a uniform, and drives a police car, etc...is a policeman.

We find this same principle to hold true in every facet of life... This is true with doctors, nurses, teachers, etc... What are the characteristics of a doctor? White coat, stethoscope, hospital? A true doctor is marked by compassion, concern for the well being of others, value of life, etc... Do you think its possible there are doctors out there who choose this path for the money? The same is true with nurses, teachers, etc... No doubt there are people who love children, and want to make a difference in their lives, thus they seek out to be a teacher. But no doubt there are some, who saw this as a good profession... Off during the summer, dayshift, etc...

In the same manner, this morning, we are going to seek to answer the question... **Who is a Jew?** Now, at first, one might not see the relevance of such a question to us here this morning... But I trust, that as we look at this passage, we'll begin to see the importance to this question, and its relevance to all of us here this morning...

To help us do just that, we need to look at 3 verses in particular. Verses 17, 28 and 29...

¹⁷Behold, thou art called a Jew,

²⁸For **he is not a Jew**, which is one outwardly;

²⁹But **he is a Jew**, which is one inwardly;

Paul declares, that it's not “*outward characteristic ... physical characteristics*” that makes a man a Jew! He may possess all the physical characteristics, and by all outward appearances, look like a Jew, yet lack 1 vital characteristic that truly makes him a Jew... **A JEWS HEART**...

To help understand Paul's point, in the Jew's eyes, there were only two kinds of people... “*Jews and Gentiles.*” The name Jew became synonymous with the worship of God, while Gentile was a reference to the “*Heathen, the pagan...*” The Godless man... In our day, all of mankind is still defined by two kinds of people, but we are more likely to use words like... “*Saved & Lost...*” a “*Christian or Unbeliever...*”

“*Salvation is of the Jews...*” That is something we must never forget... If “*Faith*” were described using the analogy of a “*tree*,” which Paul does in Romans 11:17, the roots of that tree would be the Jewish people.

¹⁷And if some of the branches be broken off, and thou, being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree;

The “Soil” that this “Family Tree” is rooted in, is that of the “One True Living God...” The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! When Christ said, Salvation is of the Jews, he was declaring that there is “None other God” but Jehovah...The God of Israel! Yahweh!

Over the centuries, God manifested his power through many signs, wonders, and miracles. And as a result, the Jews were established as “God’s chosen people...” It was through this people, that God would establish His covenant with all of mankind. A covenant that God Himself had established with Abraham. God told Abraham, that he would “bless his seed,” that Abraham would be the “father of many nations.” The Jews were known as the “Children of Abraham.” God called out prophets, Holy Men of Israel to “speak through” ...to bring forth the “written revelation of God!” It was to this people that God delivered the “Law”, it was to this people that over and over God would promise to send a “deliver” a “Messiah.”

Everything about their life, was affected and influenced by the Law of Moses... The way they dressed, what they ate and did not eat. What they were taught to believe, how they were to live, etc... Every single aspect of life was shaped from a religious perspective.

By “all outward appearances,” the man, who conformed in this manner, was naturally thought to be a Jew. And that really sets the stage, for the truth that Paul is trying to convey here in verses 17~29...

T: **NO MAN** will be “justified before God” through an “External Adherence” to religion.
Religion Can’t Save You...

¹⁷Behold, thou art called a Jew.....²⁸For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly...
²⁹But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.

Regardless of how “Religious” a man may be...Paul says, unless his heart has been “changed” by the “Grace of God”, he will perish! To make this point clear, in verses 17~20, Paul gives us a detailed description of the man he is talking too... A description that in all rights gives the appearance of a man who is “**without question**” a Jew... One that holds to the faith and belief of his forefathers...

¹⁷Behold, thou art called a Jew.....and rest in the law...

Paul describes this man as one who “Trust in the written Revelation of God given by Moses”

This speaks to his acknowledgment of the scripture as the Holy Word of God. We all “believe something”, we all have some standard as our basis of how we live. Some people live according to their raising... They continue in the ways they were brought up... That could be a life of respect to others, treating others fairly, kindness, etc... While it could also mean a life of wickedness, having been raised in a home of alcohol and gambling, cheating, etc.... But the man Paul is speaking too here, was one that was raised in the ways of God. He fully trust the writings of Moses as to be the very words of God, he has a very high view of scripture. So much, that these words become the very thing he bases his life on...

...and make thy boast of God...

Paul describes this man as one who “Professes Jehovah to be His God”...

This speaks to how he proudly proclaims to serve the one true living God, the God of Israel! He refuses to “bow down” to idols, or any other such thing... He boldly proclaims his allegiance to Yahweh... The God of our fathers, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob...The God of David!

¹⁸**And know his will...**

Paul describes this man as one that knows “The Intimate things of God” ...

This speaks to his claim to his “*intimate knowledge*” of God. He claims to know the “*mind*” of God. That’s what WILL means... It describes the intentions and plans of someone. The will consist of the desires of the heart, the thoughts of the mind... And this man Paul is speaking too, declares to know the will of God.

...and approves the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law...

Paul describes this man as one who “*Appears Wise in Discernment*”...

This speaks to “*wise choices*” he makes, as a result of what he learns from the law. He appears to be able to “*Discern*” the difference between things, able to make the “*right*” decision... The important thing to understand here, is the fact that it is not a result of his “*Spirituality*...” But rather simply a result of doing what the law says to do!...**being instructed out of the law**... Something that any man can do... You don’t have to have a personal relationship with Jesus to understand some really wise counsel from the law, from the book of Proverbs, etc...

¹⁹And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind...

Paul describes this man as one who is convinced he is “*Knows the way*...”

This speaks to the fact that this man is convinced that the path he is walking leads to God! This man is convinced, that at the end of his life, the path he has chosen will lead to a home in heaven with God. He is “*confident*” of this... Paul declares that, in his heart, he sees himself as a *guide*... One that shows the way, one that has full knowledge, and is able to show others who doesn’t know the way...

...a light of them which are in darkness...

Paul describes this man as one that sees himself as “*Righteous*”...

This speaks to his “*Goodness*...” He’s proud of the fact that his life stands out in stark contrast to that of the Gentiles... He’s nothing like them...as a matter of fact, they are complete opposites. He walks in righteousness while they walk in sin...

²⁰An instructor of the foolish.....a teacher of babes...

Paul describes this man as one that appears to be “*An Authority in Scripture...Very Knowledgeable*”...

It speaks to the “*apparent Growth*” of this man... It speaks to his “*Level of Knowledge and Understanding*” This man is not “*Ignorant to scripture*” but rather very “*well-read*.” This speaks to his confidence in “*Knowing Right & Wrong*...” This speaks to “*Correcting error*.” He sees himself as the parent, and others as children who need correction.

And then at the end of verse 20, Paul sums up his description of this man by saying...

...which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law...

The key word here is “**form**...” *μορᾶ-φo-σις* ... *formation, appearance, shape*;

T: At “*Face Value*” this man “*appears*” to be a Jew...

Paul says...In all “*Outward appearances, he appears to be one of the Children of Abraham*”

To “*look*” at this man, he would manifest the “*Characteristics*” of someone who is a “*child of God*.” By “*all appearances*...” he serves the God of Moses, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob!

But that is just Paul’s point... When God judges men...he will not judge as men do, “*superficially*.” God doesn’t judge by “*face value*...” God will look to the “*secret parts*,” he looks beneath the “*surface*!”

Paul had just stated in verse 16...

¹⁶*In the day when God shall judge... WHAT?.....the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*

That which is concealed, that which is covered...the private: the hidden, the inward...

²⁸For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly.....²⁹But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly...

T:

RELIGION CAN'T SAVE YOU ... It is impossible for a person to be “*right with God*” through an “*External Adherence*” to religion. Even though he has a form of godliness, he appears to be right with God, for He will not judge on those basis! But rather, God will look past that, to the man’s heart!

(Vs 21~29) A close look at this man’s life will reveal, that “*His Heart*” is not right! Paul states that he has conformed to “*Circumcision*” externally... But he has not done so spiritually! Paul says that true circumcision is that of the heart! It speaks to having the “*flesh*” of our hearts cut away, that means to have a “*desire*” change!

You may “conform” to the teachings of Christianity... You may really enjoy the bible, you may love good gospel music, you may enjoy going to church, etc...

But none of those things makes you a Christian... Anyone can conform “externally” to the teachings of Christianity... But the real question is a man’s heart. Do you love this world? Do you live for the here and now? Do you long to live your life to the glory of God, and to serve His will?

Things that the “Law” could never do...

The only thing that makes a man a Christian, is a “*Changed heart*” which only comes through the power of the gospel! ²⁹*But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*