

Will the Real Jew Please Stand Up

Romans 2:25-29

Sermon-in-a-Sentence: A genuine Christian does not seek to earn God's approval through the observance of religious rituals; rather, he loves the Lord and seeks to obey His Word from the heart by faith, in dependence upon the Holy Spirit.

In Romans 2, the Apostle Paul was writing to Jews who believed that they were saved because they were descendants of Abraham, because they were the recipients of the Mosaic law and because they had been circumcised. In this passage Paul explains that a real Jew is not a person who has been circumcised physically according to the law of Moses; rather, a real Jew is one who has been circumcised spiritually, in his heart, by the Holy Spirit. A real Jew is one who sincerely seeks to obey God's Word because of his faith in and love for the Lord.

- Circumcision was the sign of the covenant that God had established with Abraham. (Genesis 17:1-14)
- The tragedy in Paul's day was that the Jews had come to depend on the physical sign rather than the spiritual reality it represented. (Deuteronomy 10:12-16; 30:6)
 - There are two legitimate motives for our obedience to the Lord: 1) the fear of the Lord and; 2) love for the Lord.
 - Physical circumcision was to symbolize a heart that was circumcised by the Lord so that the individual could love God with his entire being.
- Salvation is a work of God done in the heart of a person who receives that work by faith. (Ephesians 2:8-9)
- The outward sign or seal of the covenant relationship between God and the Jews had no validity unless it was accompanied by faith manifested in obedience which the sign was supposed to signify.
- As the chosen people of God there were real blessings that He intended for the Jews to enjoy. But the *enjoyment* of those blessings was conditioned upon their *obedience* to His law.
 - Principle: Blessing if faithful, cursing if unfaithful.
 - The sign of the covenant relationship had value if they fulfilled the requirements of the law but if they broke the law, the sign of the covenant relationship was meaningless.
- In the New Testament, the time period that we are living in today, Jesus has established a New Covenant between God and Man.
 - "This cup is the new covenant in my blood; do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." (1 Corinthians 11:25)
 - Through His sacrifice on the cross, through the shedding of His blood, symbolized by the cup, Jesus provided the way into right relationship with God.
 - The essence of the New Covenant is this: That whoever places his or her faith in Jesus Christ, in His sacrificial death on the cross and victorious resurrection from the dead, that whoever believes in Him shall be saved. (John 3:16; Romans 10:9-13)

- Under the New Covenant there are two ordinances, two signs, that the Lord has given to us to remember and to celebrate our relationship with God: baptism and the Lord's Supper.
 - Just like the people in Paul's day who trusted in the sign of the covenant to save them, so there are people today who trust in their baptism and/or their observance of the Lord's Supper to save them.
 - They are trusting in the physical signs of the covenant rather than the spiritual realities of the covenant to save them.
 - "A true Jew is one who has had an inward spiritual experience in the heart, and not merely an outward physical operation. People today make this same mistake with reference to baptism or the Lord's Supper, or even church membership." (*Warren Wiersbe, Be Right, p. 38*)
 - Our baptism, our participation in the Lord's Supper, having our name on the membership rolls of the church, is meaningless if we are not trusting in Jesus Christ for our salvation and seeking to follow Him as the Lord of our life.
- As the chosen people of God through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, God has wonderful blessings for us to enjoy. But we will fully enjoy those blessings only as we live in faith and obedience to the Lord's commands.
 - Matthew 28:18-20.
 - The signs of the covenant only have meaning as we actually follow Christ in obedience to His commands.
 - We don't *earn* the relationship through our obedience; we demonstrate the *reality* of the relationship through our obedience.
- Don't trust in your baptism or your participation in the Lord's Supper or your membership in the church to get you saved. Put your trust in the Lord Jesus Christ alone and demonstrate the reality of your faith through your obedience to His teachings.
 - "The true Christian is not a man who has merely submitted to certain rites, but one who has adopted these rites because he believes that they were established by His Lord and desires thus to express his love and devotion to Him, seeking for praise 'not of men, but of God.'..." (*Charles Erdman, Romans, p. 45*)
 - "Although many thought otherwise, simply being a Jew by birth and circumcision could never gain God's undeserved grace. Externals do not make anyone a spiritual child of God. Only a clean heart that has been secured by faith can accomplish that." (*Charles Swindoll, Coming to Terms with Sin, p. 32*)