

I. Introduction and review.

- A. Hypocritical Christians keep many people away from the church.
- B. Review: Paul is showing that all are sinful and guilty before God.
 - 1. Those who have God's law are condemned by their failure to keep it. 2:12b
 - 2. Those who do not have the written law are condemned by their failure to keep the law of God which is written in their hearts. 2:14-15
- C. The Jew tries to excuse himself by pleading his special status. 2:17-29
Paul pricks the balloon of Jewish pride and presumption.

II. Your religious heritage will not save you. v. 17-24

- A. You enjoy great privileges. v. 17-20
 - 1. God has given you special status as His chosen people. v. 17-18 Ex. 19:6 Dt. 10:15
 - a. You are proud to be called a Jew. v. 17a, 28
 - b. You rely upon the fact that you have received God's law. v. 17b,23
 - c. You boast about your special relationship with God. v. 17c
 - d. Through the law you know the will of God and are able to make fine moral distinctions. v. 18
 - 2. Your status sets you above those less privileged (Gentiles). v. 19-20
 - a. The gentiles are truly blind, in darkness, foolish, and immature.
 - b. You Jews are called to be a light to the nations. Isa. 42:6-7 49:6 Ge. 12:3
 - 3. These are genuine Jewish privileges. 3:1f 9:4-5
 - a. The tragedy is that they have been abused. Ga. 2:15
 - b. They have a false sense of security. Mic. 3:11-12 Jer. 7:3-7 John 8:33
 - c. Sadly the guides are blind. Mt. 15:14 23:15-24
 - 4. We as professing Christians are also privileged. Mt. 5:14-16
- B. You haven't lived up to your privileged calling. v. 21-24 Mark 7:9-13 Luke 11:39
 - 1. You are hypocrites who don't practice what you preach. v. 21-22 Mt. 23:3-4
 - a. Mere religious knowledge is worthless without practice. Js. 2:14f Mt. 7:24-27
 - b. Mere moralism is powerless to change the heart, even of the moralist himself
 - 2. Those who dare to teach God's Word are most accountable. Js. 3:1
 - 3. Your proud hypocrisy brings disgrace upon the Name of God Whom you represent in the world. v. 23-24 Is. 52:5 Eze. 36:17-21
 - 4. Hypocritical Christians bring shame to the Lord's Name.
 - a. We are living epistles of Christ read by all people.
 - b. Do you live as lights in a dark world? Eph. 5:8 I Pe. 2:12
 - c. Remember you have an audience. I Ti. 6:1 Ti. 2:5 II Pe. 2:2

III. Your religious ceremonies will not rescue you from God's wrath. v. 25-29

- A. Your rite without the reality makes you no better than a Gentile. v. 25 He. 4:2
 - 1. Circumcision, the sign of the covenant, is the last line of Jewish defense.
 - 2. Your circumcision is only valuable if you keep the covenant it represents.
 - a. Paul does not deny the Divine origin and the value of circumcision as a sign of membership in the covenant nation. 3:1f Gen. 17:9f
 - b. Circumcision represents God's promise of blessing, if you fulfill the law.
 - c. If you rely upon circumcision, you must keep the whole law. Ga. 5:3
 - d. Circumcision is also the sign and seal of the righteousness of faith. 4:11

3. If you fail to practice the law, the outward sign of circumcision is useless.
 - a. The bare sign gives you no claim.
 - b. Your unbelief and sin have cut you off from the blessings of the covenant.
 - c. You are no better off than an uncircumcised gentile. Jer. 9:25 Acts 7:51
 4. Religious symbolism without spiritual substance is still worthless.
 - a. People are still trusting in sacraments and rites.
 - b. Church ordinances are worthless if spiritual realities are not present.
- B. Those who have the reality (obedience) without the rite are the true Jews. v. 26-27**
1. The reality without the rite is valid as if the rite were present. v. 26b 4:9-12
 2. In what sense can the uncircumcised man keep the law? v. 26a, 27a
 - a. We know that he cannot actually keep it perfectly and merit salvation. 3:9,20
 - b. Is Paul speaking only hypothetically?
 - c. Is Paul speaking of the Gentile who has right relationship to God by faith in Christ Who has fulfilled the demands of the law? 8:3-4
 - d. Is Paul speaking of the Gentile who has the obedience of faith? 2:6-10
 3. The faithful Gentile is a rebuke to the faithless Jew. v. 27 Mt. 12:41-42 8:11-12
- C. Who is truly a Jew? v. 28-29**
1. The essence of being a true Jew is not outward and visible but inward and invisible. Rev. 2:9
 2. The important circumcision is of the heart, not the flesh. Ga. 6:15 5:6 Jer. 4:4 9:25-26 Deut. 10:16 Ezek. 44:7
 3. Heart circumcision is internally administered by the Holy Spirit, as opposed to the external circumcision required by the law. 7:6 II Co. 3:6
 4. The ritual is praised by men, but the reality is praised by God. I Sa. 16:7 Lu. 16:15 Jo. 12:43 Ge. 29:35 49:8
 - a. God is not impressed by costumes, rituals, and visible displays. Mt. 6:1f 23:5f
 - b. God sees the heart. 2:16 Ps. 139:1f Heb. 4:13
 - c. The true Jew (praiseworthy man) is so inwardly.
 5. Paul is indicating how the New Covenant operates. Jer. 31:33 Joel 2:28-29
 - a. Physical circumcision is no longer required. II Co. 3:4-11 Ga. 2:3 Acts 16:3
 - b. What matters is the inward work of the Holy Spirit. Ezek. 11:19-20 36:26-27
 - c. Believing Jews and Gentiles are the true children of Abraham.
 - d. When the heart is circumcised by the Spirit, the law will be kept. Jer. 31:33 Ezek. 11:19-20 36:26-27

IV. Concluding applications.

- A. Paul has crushed all Jewish hope based upon the mere fact that they are Jews.
- B. People today are still relying upon religious status and rituals.
- C. You can only be saved by the righteousness of Christ. 1:17 3:21-24 5:1

Discussion Questions for Family Worship

1. What were the privileges of the Jews? v. 17-20
2. What are the privileges of those growing up in Christian homes and churches?
3. Why were the privileges of the Jews worthless? v. 21-24
4. How does the hypocrisy of professing Christians bring disgrace upon God's Name? v. 24
5. How was circumcision beneficial to the Jews? v. 25
6. When does a religious rite become worthless? v. 25
7. In what way to Gentiles fulfill the requirements of the law? v. 26-27
8. Who is truly a Jew? v. 28-29