***Who is a Genuine Jew?
RO17-01***

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Please turn to Romans 2:28 and 29. We are now going to complete the second chapter of Romans.

Religious people who are not born again are lulled into a state of complacency relative to their lost condition because of the very rituals which they perform. The religious rituals to which they devote themselves give them the impression that somehow they are acceptable with God.

Paul has been talking about this particular type of human being in the section that we've been studying. He has shown that this religious type is amply illustrated in humanity by the unsaved religious Jew. He has shown that this religious type, with his Jewish heritage of the Old Testament revelation, does not automatically come to salvation just because he possesses a Bible. It is not enough simply to know the gospel. It is not enough simply to know God, and to know about Him. It is not enough to have a Bible and to have that information. It has to be learned, and then it has to have a positive response to it. Mere possession of that book will never benefit the individual. Unless he begins to read it, and unless he begins to have instructions so that he understands what he reads, the Word of God will be of no benefit to him.

**Guilt**

The religious unbelieving Jew, the Old Testament, was doing exactly that. He went through his prescribed ritual, but he was still a lost sooner. He was just as lost as the pagan gentiles around him. He had spiritual advantages, but he was not able to solve his guilt problem before God with his ritual. You want to remember that that is the problem that people have. People have a real genuine guilt problem before God. You cannot dismiss guilt. This is what faces every human being. He has a conscience. That means that he is aware of God. That gives him a sense of guilt because he knows that he has violated the principles of conscience. Therefore, he has a real moral guilt. That's the issue that has to be removed. Moral guilt cannot be removed by human good works of any kind. Once a person understands that, then there is hope for him to be saved. Once he understands that he has real moral guilt before God, and that that cannot be erased by anything that he can do, then he is ready to say, "Well, what's the answer?"

Of course, that's the point of all that Paul has been doing. He started way back with the immoral man, and he established the fact that the immoral person has moral guilt before God. Then he took the moral person, and he showed that the moral person, with his levels of morality, still without eternal life within him, has a moral problem that has not been solved. Now he's taking the highest category of all – the very serious, devoted, religious, participating Jew, and he's showing again that this class of humanity has moral guilt which has not been resolved.

When he gets through with the religious Jew, he's going to sum it all up, and he's going to say, "Well, here's what this means. There is not a human being on the face of the earth; there never has been; and, there never will be, that ever took the breath of life, who is not morally guilty before God, and therefore, condemned to the lake of fire. That is what he's aiming toward.

So, Paul has pointed out that all that the religious unbelieving Jew does in the way of ritual is worthless, particularly the ritual that he took most pride in – that of circumcision. Circumcision identified him with the Abrahamic promises of blessing. It was true, if you are a male Jew, unless you were circumcised, you could not enter the Abrahamic Covenant blessings. But it did not mean that circumcision entitled you to eternal life. A Jew of the Old Testament had to be saved just as a gentile today has to be saved. He had to be saved on the basis of the grace of God by faith in a work that God would provide for His eternal life. The Jew did not always know in clear detail what that work of provision was going to be. All he could do was trust God to solve his sin problem.

We, this side of the cross, are very definitive. It's to us: "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you shall be saved." That couldn't be said to the Jew of the Old Testament. His method of salvation was the same, but the content of what he believed in (that he understood of his belief) was different. That was progressive revelation that evolved over the years. But the system was the same.

So, Paul takes this thing of circumcision, which was a visual aid to portray a spiritual lesson. The whole system of Judaism was one visual aid after another. It was one picture portraying one spiritual truth concerning the life and the ministry and the person of Jesus Christ. What was mere pictures in the Old Testament came out in specific focus in great detail in the New Testament. So, when you put the whole two testaments together, you have a tremendous revelation from God of information in detail: first, in pictorial form; and, then filled out in specific detail in the New Testament – which you could have no other way. If you do not have this information within your soul, then you can't operate as a human being. This is divine wisdom. When you have divine wisdom, you are a success in life. When you have divine wisdom in your mentality, you are a winner every time, and God will prosper you.

**Meditate on the Word of God**

What do you want to do? Make better grades at school? Start meditating upon the Word of God. Start listening to doctrine, and start studying the Word of God, and start mulling it over in your mind. Do you know what's going to happen to you? Your grades are going to improve. I know you're smiling, because that certainly couldn't be true. So, I challenge you to go ahead and try it. The very exercise of taking in the Word of God in itself prepares you for study, but what you take in has a way of enlightening your mentality so that it increases your smarts. So, I commend to you the meditation upon the Word of God. That's exactly what Joshua 1:8 is referring to.

**Circumcision**

So, Paul takes physical circumcision, which was a symbol of a spiritual truth, and he proceeds to deal with this before these unbelieving, religious Jewish people. Real circumcision was inward. It was a matter of circumcising the mind; that is, of removing a spiritual flesh that is a factor of flesh in the spiritual realm, the old sin nature. To remove control of the sin nature over your mentality was symbolized by the external removal of a portion of flesh from the male body.

In Deuteronomy 10:16, we read, "Circumcise, therefore, the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked." The foreskin of your heart refers to the mentality of the soul. Immediately, right here in the books of Moses, any Jew who studied the Old Testament would have been confronted again and again with the fact that the purpose of circumcision externally was to give a pictorial presentation of something you were supposed to do internally – something that was an act of faith whereby you removed the control of sin in the form of the old sin nature from off your soul by bringing in the regenerative qualities of God the Holy Spirit to give you eternal life.

That was inward circumcision. It was not only in the books of Moses. As the centuries rolled by, it was also again within the later prophets. Jeremiah 4:4 says, "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart, you men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, lest My fury come forth like fire, and burn that none can quench it, because of the evil of your doings." God says, "Circumcise again the internal attitude of heart (of mind)." God says, "If you do not, I'm going to deal with you with My wrath (the wrath of God), and I'm going to burn you with a fire that you will not be able to quench." What's He talking about? He's talking about the eternal judgment of God when a person stands before the great white throne who has never had circumcision of heart. And what He's going to face is the lake of fire. And God says, "If you don't solve this problem, My wrath will come upon you like a tornado, and you will suffer for all eternity with the fires of hell.

So, personal salvation in the Old Testament was a very definitive thing. The Old Testament called unbelievers, consequently, the uncircumcised of hearts. Once more, in Jeremiah 9:26, we read, "Egypt and Judah and Edom and the children of Ammon and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners that dwell in the wilderness; for all these nations (unsaved, pagan nations) are uncircumcised. And all the house of Israel is uncircumcised." Where? "In heart." Here, God is sadly declaring that not only are the pagan nations lost (lacking circumcision of heart), but even a large number of His people Israel were not circumcised in heart.

In a moment, what Paul is driving at here, is he's going to challenge the pride that these religious, unbelieving Jews took in the fact that they were Jews. And he's going to show them that in reality they were no such thing. You almost have to be a Jew to appreciate the shock of a statement like that, and the horror of such a thought – the thought of not being a Jew if you were born a Jew, and the thought that you were really not part of that nation. This would be something like thinking that you had been born into some nice, Berean family, and then suddenly discover that that wasn't your family at all. You had been born in the Rockefeller family, or some other horrendous experience. But these Jews could not believe what Paul was going to say to them in a minute. He was really hitting them when he hit them in this way.

Ezekiel 44:9 says, "Thus says the Lord God, 'No foreigner, uncircumcised in heart, or uncircumcised in flesh." There you have both of them. The prophets could not have made it more clear. The Holy Spirit could not have been clearer about this fact – that circumcision requires a twofold aspect: external; and, internal. You could have internal circumcision of heart, and you would go to heaven, even if you didn't have external circumcision. But if you had external circumcision without the internal circumcision, there was no way that you would ever see heaven's shores.

This is exactly what the religious person does. He takes a legitimate, pictorial thing that the Bible puts in the form of a ritual, like baptism or the Lord's Supper, and he twists the thing into being a vehicle of salvation in itself. He completely bypasses what these things are picturing, which are the real vehicles of salvation.

So, he says, "Uncircumcised in heart, or uncircumcised in flesh, shall enter into my sanctuary of any foreigner that is among the children of Israel." When you get to the book of Acts in the New Testament, this same attack is made by the communicators of God's viewpoint against those who are unsaved as being uncircumcised of heart, particularly those among the Jews. In Act 7:51: "You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears. Do you always resist the Holy Spirit? As your fathers did, so you do?" Stiff-necked means rebels in spiritual things. Here are believers. They are uncircumcised of heart and uncircumcised of ears. When you have circumcision of heart, that means that you are now in a position to receive God's viewpoint. But you can be circumcised in heart; that is, a believer, but have ears that are uncircumcised. You can have ears that you have not peeled off the skin resistance and rebelliousness off of, so that you would hear the Word of God. Some of these Jews were born-again. They had the external and the internal circumcision, but they had not gone positive in their attitude toward receiving the Word of God and acting upon it. So, the way you circumcise your ears is by positive volition toward the Word of God so that you can understand it, and you can act upon it.

So, Paul's point is that external circumcision had absolutely no value apart from internal circumcision. In Galatians 6:15, the apostle Paul writes, "For in Christ Jesus, neither circumcision avails anything, nor uncircumcision; but a new creature," which means that it doesn't make any difference whether you are circumcised or not, particularly now in the church age. It did mean something in the Old Testament period. The external part was the secondary feature. The internal circumcision was the primary important feature.

So, a religious, unbelieving Jew had the ritual of circumcision, which entitled him indeed to the blessings of the Abrahamic covenant. But he lacked the new birth, which would enable him to enter into those blessings. And that was the sad picture concerning the Jewish people. These unbelieving, religious people had the external right that would qualify them to enjoy the blessings that were promised under the Abrahamic Covenant. But because they did not have internal salvation (that internal circumcision), they could enter into those blessings. For that reason, the Lord very sadly warned them many times that outsiders (pagan gentiles) who came with circumcision of heart would be going into His kingdom, while people who were descendants of Abraham (Jewish people) were left outside.

By the way, remember that to be a Jew, you have to be a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. It's not exactly right to say that a Jew is a descendant of Abraham. We kind of fall into that as an easy way of a point of reference. But you must say that he must be in the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. That eliminates all the Arab nations, because a great quantity of the Arabs were descended from Abraham and from Ishmael. So, the Arabs also are in the descendancy of Abraham, but that doesn't make them Jews. And some of the other nations came through Abraham and through Isaac, but they did not come through Jacob. Therefore, they're not qualified to be Jews. A real Jew (and God knows who they are) are those who have been descended from these three patriarchs.

So, the unregenerate condition of the religious Jew was something that Paul was trying to make so clear that they could not deny it. This was very clear to the gentiles. The unregenerate condition of these ritualistic Jews was so clear to the gentiles that it caused the gentiles to blaspheme the God of the Jews. And they pointed to the Jews with contempt. They actually condemned the Jew for both his hypocrisy, and for the very things that they were doing.

**They are not even Jews**

This line of attack by the apostle Paul very naturally puts the religious, unbelieving Jew on the defensive. Now Paul is going to close in with the most telling blow of all. He is going to give them the coup de grâce. He's got them staggering on the ropes. Now Paul comes in for the kill. They've heard him say some very shocking things, but now he's going to top that. Not only has he told them that they are unregenerate, but he now is going to declare to them that they are not even Jews. They're not Jews at all.

This same point comes up a little later in this book, in Romans 9:6, where we read, “Not as though the Word of God has taken no effect, for they are not all Israel who are of Israel." They are not all Jews who are of Jewish descent from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. So, Paul, in effect, is going to play the famous television game with the Jews now: "Will the real Jew please stand up?" And he's going to proceed to identify the real Jew. Now, where he could present that question, all these unbelieving, religious, very active Jews would have risen to their feet and said, "I am the real Jew." And Paul, as master of ceremonies says, "I'm sorry, you're wrong. Sit down. You're not the real Jew."

So, we begin in verse 28, where Paul says, "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly." The word for is the Greek word "gar." It is used here to introduce an explanation of what Paul has said in verses 25-27 concerning circumcision and uncircumcision, and how Paul has pointed out that some people among the gentiles, who do not have the external rite of circumcision, yet are responding to their God-consciousness (their conscience within them), and consequently, they are performing that which is righteous that the law is trying to teach the Jew to do. But the Jew who does have the external circumcision violates the righteous standards that the law teaches him.

So, Paul is going to explain now (introduce an explanation) concerning the fact that uncircumcised people are going to be judging circumcised people. This is extremely confusing to the religious Jew. How can an uncircumcised one still be viewed in God's eyes as circumcision? That's what Paul says. Paul said, "The person who doesn't have circumcision – his response to righteousness, in effect, puts him in the status of having the rite of circumcision. The Jew says, "I don't understand that."

So, Paul says, "All right, I am going to explain it to you:" "For he is not." The word "is" is the Greek word "eime" (status quo). It's present. This constantly is the case. It's active. It's true of the religious Jew himself. It's indicative. This is a statement of fact. This is something negative: "For he is not," and the Greek word is "ou," which is the strong negative. It is not "me," which is the weak negative. "Ou," the strong one, is used here. Paul says, "Absolutely understand me. He is not a Jew." He's going to tell us what is not a Jew.

The word "Jew" is "ioudaios." This refers to a member of the human family who was descended through the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. This refers to that special group of people that God has called out for His very own. Please remember that it is very significant to be called a Jew in the Old Testament era, because only the Jewish people have been selected by God from all the nations of the world as His particular and peculiar people. God did not select the Germans as His special people. He did not select the Irish as His special people. He did not select the Scandinavians as His special people. He did not select the Hottentots in Africa as His special people; the Pygmies; or, anybody else. Only one nation has been selected as His special people: the "ioudaios" (the Jews). They have a very privileged title, and one that the Jews rightly were proud of: God's chosen earthly people.

"For he is not a Jew who is." "Who is" is actually the Greek definite article "the" ("ho"): "He is not a Jew who is one outwardly." "One outwardly is what is called a prepositional phrase, because it's made up of this little Greek preposition "en," which means "in;" specifically, "in the sphere of," and it's made up of the word "phaneros," which means "open to sight" or "visible." So, a Jew is not determined in God's sight by something that is open to sight – something that is in the sphere of the external is what he is saying. You cannot identify a Jew by something which is in the sphere of the external. Hitler thought he could, and to a certain extent this is true. Jews as a people have certain physical outward characteristics that sometimes makes them readily identifiable.

However, God says, "No matter what features of the body you identify as being Jewish in appearance, this is not the way you identify a Jew. You cannot mark a Jew by something that is externally visible – something open to the site. It takes something more. And he's going to explain that. The primary thing, of course, that these Jews that Paul is speaking about, identified themselves with was just exactly this – an external feature; namely, the act of circumcision.

We may translate this in this way: "For not he who is so in an outward fashion is a Jew." That's one side: "Neither." The word "neither" is "oude." This, you will recognize has this negative "ou" again. Therefore, it is the strong negative. This is a strong expression of "neither:" “Neither is that ('is that' is not in the Greek) circumcision," and there is our old word "peritome." "Peritome" means "to cut around." This is the ritual on the male Jew: "Which is outward." "Which is outward" is a prepositional phrase. "Which is outward has "en" again, meaning "in the sphere of." And it says "phaneros" – again that which is visible.

So, again, what is circumcision? Well, the Jew says, "I can tell you what circumcision is. Now you stumped me there, and you kind of set me back when you told me that a Jew could not be identified by anything external." Then the apostle Paul, knows just exactly what these religious Jews were going to say. They'll say, "Well, I'll tell you what will identify a Jew: whether but he has circumcision or not." Hitler used this very thing. There were some people who claimed, in Hitler's conquest, but they were not Jews. And among the males, they confirmed this claim by whether the man had been circumcised or not. If he had received circumcision. Hitler's henchmen said, "You're a Jew." If he had not, it was tantamount to a legal evidence that he was not a Jew, because the Germans knew that no Jew, even today, would permit a male child not to be circumcised.

Consequently, it was very easy, on this basis alone, of the people that Hitler conquered, and of those he slaughtered for their race, as being Jews. It was very easy for him to identify the Jewish males.

But Paul says, "I know what you're thinking. I know you're going to lean heavily on that external right. But I'm going to tell you that you can't even identify a Jew because he has circumcision." At this point, the religious Jew just about gagged like someone trying to swallow a broken chicken bone. He was just astounded. This was absolutely so ridiculous that he was ready to walk off and not even talk to Paul anymore. That is circumcision, by the way, which is external in the flesh (the "sarx"), which simply means "the body." Here it is referring to a portion of the male phallus.

We may translate it in this way: "Neither that which is in an outward fashion (in the flesh) is circumcision."

So, a Jew is not just somebody who was born in the line of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and who has experienced the rite of circumcision. Abraham was not only a Jew in terms of the fact that he had been circumcised outwardly, but he was also a Jew by the fact that he had experienced inward circumcision (spiritual circumcision). Romans 4:1-16 describes that.

Romans 4:22-23: "And therefore it was imputed to him for righteousness. Now it was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him." What was imputed to Abraham, you'll find out earlier, if you read through Romans 4; and, that is righteousness, because he believed God, and it was imputed to him, and it was recorded that he was saved by something that God credited to his account as a result of an act of faith on his part. The point being, God did not credit salvation to Abraham on the basis of the fact that he had experienced outward circumcision. Remember that the Bible is always a book that is actually taking place in history. The original historical record is in Genesis 15:6, where we read: "And he (Abraham) believed in the Lord, and He (God) counted it (or credited) to him for righteousness." That's how Abraham was saved. That's how everybody is saved who ever was saved – believing in God (the grace of God), crediting absolute righteousness to that person's account.

So, Abraham, the first Jew, was saved by an internal circumcision of heart. He displayed this by the outward circumcision on his body. He was not trusting in his physical circumcision, but in that which it represented of God's salvation. In Romans 4:3, Paul says, "For what says the Scripture?" As we have just read: "Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness."

Circumcision in itself, then, has no value to somebody who happens to be a descendant of Abraham. Those who are Jews today, and they are counting on that, are going to be disillusioned when they face God. 1 Corinthians 719 says, "Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of the commandments of God." That's the point. Keeping the commandments of God. That commandment includes the gospel message. That commandment includes trusting God for eternal life. That's what counts with God – not these rituals.

So, Paul has shocked the religious Jews by telling them that they are not Jews in the first place, and furthermore, that they have never really been circumcised. So, both of the things that they took great pride in, he has stripped away from them.

We can convert that to modern times. Your pride in your water of baptism, perhaps, needs to be stripped away from you. Your pride in your church membership needs to be stripped away from you. Your pride in the fact that you have a Bible that's full of notes, and a notebook full of notes to accompany it, should be stripped away from you. These are all externals that will not substitute for faith. You're doing the same thing that the Jew did with his circumcision – external ritual. All of these rituals have their place, and should be done; but which, if misunderstood, will cost to your soul.

**What is a Jew?**

Verse 29 then proceeds to tell us what a Jew is. He has made it very clear to us now what a Jew is not. A Jew is not simply somebody descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and who has external circumcision. Well, what is a Jew then? Who is the Jew?

Verse 29 begins with "But" ("alla"). There is another word in the Greek language "de," which also means but. "Alla" is stronger. The apostle Paul now wants to make a point of emphasis, and he is contrasting this with the "not" that he referred to up in verse 28: "For he is *not* a Jew." You remember that that was an emphatic word also. That was "ou:" "He is not a Jew who has these external things, *but* (equally emphatic)," Paul says, "I will tell you who is: "He who is so," is again the Greek "the" ("ho"). The word "is" is not found in the Greek: "A Jew" is "ioudaios:" "Who is one inwardly." Again we have a prepositional phrase. This time it is again with the preposition "in" (that little word "en") – "in the sphere." This time, the word that goes with it is "kruptos," which means "hidden" or "inner." And it has the definite article "the:" "*The* hidden." Therefore, it makes it "the hidden one" or "the hidden man:" "In the sphere of the inner man" is the idea: "In the sphere of what is internal."

**Christians are *not* Jews**

Here is where you determine who is a Jew and who is not. Do not slip into the mistake of thinking that what Paul is saying is that today, in the age of grace, you can identify who is a Jew and who is not on the basis of internal circumcision of heart. If you do, the next thing you're going to say is that: "I have internal circumcision of heart. I have trusted in Christ as Savior. The old sin nature has been circumcised, therefore, from my soul, so I am a Jew." And you'll be going around and saying to your friends that you're a Jew, and you'll be very happy to know that you are a Jewish person. Some people wish that. I've heard people say, "Oh, I just wish I had been born a Jew." If they read a passage like that, they'll say, "I am a Jew." Then maybe they'll start talking like a Jew, and start putting on the customs of the Jews, and who knows where they can go with that. They may even grow beards, and stuff like that, and say, "I'm a Jew." Well, some people could really get carried away, and I don't want you to get carried away.

**The Church is *not* Spiritual Israel**

Remember that Paul is talking about a different era. Paul is talking about the Old Testament situation. And there the Old Testament, there were many who were born through the line of the three patriarchs. And Paul said, "Not all of you are Jews. And I'm going to identify which of you are Jews." The Bible never calls a gentile a Jew. Did you get that? That leaves most of you out. The Bible never calls a gentile a Jew. Furthermore, the Bible never calls a Christian a Jew. Christians are never referred to as spiritual Israel.

**Gentiles are *not* Jews**

The amillennialist likes to sneak that term in. He likes to talk about the church as being spiritual Israel, but that's a finagling with the language of Scripture. And unless you are well-versed in Scripture, you'll fall for that. That'll be an impressive argument that the amillennialist will give you. But the Bible never refers to the church as spiritual Israel, So, that takes care of all the rest of us here. As gentiles and Christians, we are automatically eliminated from being Jews.

**Saved Jews Become Christians**

Well you may say, "How about a Jew today? Well, what happens to a Jew today who receives Jesus Christ as his Savior?" The first thing that happens to him is that he stops being a Jew. In God's sight, he is automatically canceled out of the Jewish category, and he is transferred, in the sight of God, into the Christian category. Everybody today is either Jew, gentile, or Christian.

When you listen to television programs, particularly talk shows, you will sense (you will be aware of the fact of) how ignorant people are about this threefold division. They don't have divine wisdom. They don't know how God looks at things. Therefore, they always speak in terms of the opposite of a Jew as being a Christian. They speak about Jews and Christians. Even Jews themselves do this very frequently – almost regularly. He's a Jew, and he talks about the opposite of himself as being Christians. But the opposite of a Jew is not Christian. The opposite of a Jew is gentile.

Here you have a Jew, and here you have gentile. They are opposites. But out of these two comes a third category called Christian. In God's eyes, you're either Jew, or the opposite (gentile), or a totally new body made up of both Jew and gentile called Christian. And you can only be in one or the other. Therefore, it is a misnomer even to speak about some people as being Christian Jews. They are not Christian Jews. They were once Jews, but they are only Christians. You could speak about them as "Christians, once Jews," if you wanted to do that. And you can speak about yourself as "Christian, once gentile," if you want to do it, but you are no longer in that category.

So, the apostle Paul here is pointing out what identified a Jew outside of the church age. He's referring to those who are genuinely constituted under the Old Testament order as descendants of the patriarchs, and under Judaism of the Mosaic Law.

Today, you couldn't have a real Jew in effect, because the church age interrupts the dispensation of the Old Testament. The dispensation of the Jews has been interrupted by the church. Therefore, the Jew type is not possible today. All this is some racial identification. But in the eyes of God, he no longer sees Jews and gentiles on the earth. The earth, in God's eyes, is crawling with sinners destined for hell, and that's all. But once the rapture takes place, everybody is going to change color in God's eyes. Then God is going to see Jews walking around the earth, and he's going to see gentiles walking around the earth. But until that happens, everybody is the same color with God.

"For he is a Jew who is one inwardly." Paul says, "I'll identify what real circumcision is as well, and ('kai'), indicating here an additional point: "And circumcision ('peritome' again)," which refers to the ritual circumcision of the Mosaic Law: "Is that" is not in the Greek: "Circumcision is that of the heart." "Heart" is the word "kardia," which means "the mind and mentality of the soul:" "Is that of the heart in (en' – in the sphere of) the spirit ('pneuma')." "Pneuma" stands here for God the Holy Spirit.

**Real Circumcision**

Real circumcision is a matter of an internal work of God the Holy Spirit upon our souls, where we are made spiritually alive by the Spirit of God. It is an internal matter, and: "It is not," he says. And again he uses the strong negative "ou:" "It is not in the letter." "Not in the letter" is "gramma." And the word "letter" here refers to the rituals of the Mosaic Law (the written rituals): "Whose" is the relative pronoun "hos." And we may translate this as "concerning whom" (the genuine Jew): "Praise" ("epainos"), or "commendation:" "Is" is not in the Greek: "Not (the strong negative again – 'ou') of (which is 'ek' – meaning 'from') men ('anthropos')." That means "humanity" or "mankind:" "But" ("alla" – the strong "but"): "But from ('ek" again) God ('theos')."

So, what he is saying here is that real circumcision is not an external thing. It is of God the Holy Spirit.

Furthermore, he says that a real Jew is one inwardly because he has an inward circumcision of heart by God the Holy Spirit – not a circumcision in the letter of the ritual. Furthermore, this real Jew is identified by the fact that his praise is not a men, but of God. So verse 29 says, "But he is so (in the sphere of the inner man) is a Jew, and circumcision is of the heart (in the sphere of the spirit), not in the sphere of the letter (concerning whom) the praise is not from people, but from God." Men will praise what God condemns, because men (unregenerate people) have human a viewpoint value system.

So, just because you have human approval does not ensure your having eternal life. Religious unsaved people are always equating the fact that they have human approval for the fact that God approves them. How many religious, unbelieving people are trusting on the fact that they have the approval of some priest, or some preacher, on what they're doing? And that priest and preacher has led them to believe that this external ritual that they are engaged in makes them acceptable to God, and that someday they will have eternal life.

This, in effect, really prevents personal salvation. It prevents the person from going to the source of Jesus Christ for that eternal life. Millions of people who are very religious people have consequently ended up in Hades, and are destined for the lake of fire, because they had the highest commendation of people, and they equated that with God's commendation.

So, when people argue to you about the fact of what their church teaches and their faithfulness, what they are telling you is, "I have the praise of men." And Paul says, "You're going to hell with that praise. It will not take you to heaven." 1 Corinthians 4:5 tells us how God is going to praise those at the Judgment Seat of Christ who are really His.

So, Paul's identification of what a genuine Jew is declares to us that all Christ-rejecting Jews today are not Jews. So, the whole state of Israel is non-Jewish. If you want to make a big hit in Israel, just visit Israel, and tell all the Jews that you meet, "I want to tell you something about you. You're not a Jew." The truth of the matter is, by God's standards, he is not a Jew. Why? Because he does not have internal circumcision of heart. He will argue back with you. He will show you his lineage from the patriarchs, and he'll show you his ritual legalistic righteousness. He performs all the acts, and he has a circumcision, and he does exactly what these people did – arguing on the basis of externals.

The Old Testament religious heritage is still esteemed by Jews today, and yet they are not God's special people. And that is sad. All the Jews in the United States, who view themselves as being part of this special reason, and they're proud of it, and they make references to it, are really not Jews at all. They're living in a dream world. That is why these people are condemned. That's why they're lost.

Maybe this will help you to understand how a person can be religious and sincere and devoted to God, and yet God is in none of it. God rejects every bit of it. That is a classic example of how externals will blind you to your real condition.

So, Paul statement naturally raises some questions in the minds of the Jew to the effect of: "Well, what difference does it make whether I'm a Jew? What difference does it make if we keep the rituals? What value is there to have been born a Jew?" Well, he's going to answer that question next. We begin chapter 3 with Paul, zeroing in (in the next session) on that very question. Is there any advantage and value in having a Jewish heritage? Paul is going to tell us whether there is or not.

However, to tie it up in this session, how about your heritage? Is there any advantage in your having a Christian heritage? We might be able to put these verses in these terms: "For he is not a Christian who is one outwardly (church membership and ritual). Neither is that baptism which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Christian who is one inwardly, and baptism is that of the heart, the Holy Spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not of men, but of God."

If you have God's praise, it will be because you have received His Son. You can reject His Son and have the praise of men. You can have the externals of your religious life: your baptism; your membership; your giving; and, everything else, and still be lost. The thing that counts is your inward faith in Jesus Christ. If anybody here today has not received Him specifically in that way, then this is what God expects you to do. Get your heart circumcised today by receiving Christ as your personal Savior.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1975

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