

Rooting Through Romans Pt 9 Romans 2:17-29, Jew As I Say, Not As I Jew

A Sermon Series by Pastor Byron Chesney, Porchlight Baptist Church

Romans 2:17-29

17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,
18 And knowest *his* will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;
19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,
20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.
21 Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?
22 Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?
23 Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?
24 For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.
25 For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.
26 Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?
27 And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?
28 For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:
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.

Last time we looked at verses 12-16 and answered the question, "Will Those Who Have Never Heard the Gospel Go to Hell?" We discovered by rightly dividing the Word of Truth the answer is yes, unless they are saved through Jesus Christ they will most certainly go to hell and the reason being because they are sinners.

We pick up this morning by looking at verses 17-29 which will finish this chapter and we will look at what Paul is writing specifically toward the Jews and he tears down their false presumption of righteousness based upon their race and heritage and calls them out for their hypocrisy.

I've titled the message "**Jew As I Say, Not As I Jew**," and you will understand why as we look at this Scripture.

17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

Remember, in Chapter 1 Paul spent time focusing upon the Gentiles and their depravity and God's judgement against their sin of rejection. Then here in Chapter 2 he turned his sights on the Jews. Since Paul himself was a Jew, he perfectly understood their mindset.

Paul describes his Jewish background in his letter to the **Philippians 3:3-5** For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. 4 Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: 5 Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee;

Also, Paul writing to the Church at Corinth says this in **2 Corinthians 11:22** Are they Hebrews? so *am* I. Are they Israelites? so *am* I. Are they the seed of Abraham? so *am* I.

So, if there was anyone that was able to speak on the mindset of the Jew, it was Paul.

Again he says in verse 17 Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, Remember Paul has been expounding upon God's righteousness and how it applied to both Jew and Gentile alike, but he is turning his attention specifically toward the Jew here. They were proud of their keeping of the Law, their adherence to holy days and ceremonies, their heritage, and their circumcision, which he will turn his sights on in the last 5-verses of our text.

I am afraid that we as Christians can also get to feeling mighty proud of our heritage, our religious practices, and our appearances. We sometimes turn into prideful, boastful, snobbish bullies whenever we are around others that aren't like us or don't share our beliefs.

As much as I love and believe in the King James Bible, I fear that we sometimes allow it to become an idol in our lives. That may be hard for you to understand but if you spend a lot of time listening to King James Only preachers (and I am one of them), you will find out that a big percentage of them spend more time bragging about being a KJV Only preacher than they do preaching what is inside the KJV.

18 And knowest *his* will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;

Here he confronts their smugness in their knowledge of the Law. Jewish children were taught the Law starting at age five (5). They took God's Word to heart where he says in **Deuteronomy 6:6-9** And these words, which I command thee this day, shall be in thine heart: 7 And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up. 8 And thou shalt bind them for a sign upon thine hand, and they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes. 9 And thou shalt write them upon the posts of thy house, and on thy gates.

While they should obey God's Word, it had become nothing more than a habit and routine for them instead of a desire to please the Lord.

I feel the same thing many times whenever I am praying over a meal. We pray at every meal and more times than none it is the standard "*Lord, thank you for this day, thank you for this food, please bless it to the nourishment of our bodies, Amen.*" I often wonder if the Lord gets sick and tired of hearing our same old rehearsed and repeated prayers of platitude?

19 And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, 20 An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

The Jews always had an heir of superiority when it came to matters of religion and Law. They naturally assumed they were much smarter than everyone else, especially the Gentiles (which they considered "blind") that means blind in the ways and truths of God. After all, it was the Jews Prophet, Isaiah who wrote:

Isaiah 42:6-7 I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; 7 To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, *and* them that sit in darkness out of the prison house.

Paul wasn't the only one who ripped into the Jews for their self-superiority. Jesus in his 7-Woes to the Scribes and Pharisees said this: **Matthew 23:24** *Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.* Not only that, but 5-different times in that chapter Jesus called them blind and twice blind guides.

The Jews looked upon all other races as babes and fools when it came to religious matters and the things of God.

As Christians, we too must be careful that we do not take what we know about God and religion and feel that we are superior to those that do not have the knowledge and understanding that we have. Nothing will turn someone off more than some arrogant bragging wise-guy trying to set everyone straight and show them just how smart we are.

Don't forget what Jesus said when the Disciples came to him asking who was the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. **Matthew 18:3-4** And said, *Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. 4 Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.*

21 *Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?* 22 *Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?* 23 *Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?*

And here, is the reason for the title of this message. Paul calls the Jews out for the **Jew as I Say, Not as I Jew**, hypocrisy.

Paul even had to call Peter out on it one time:

Galatians 2:11-14 *But when Peter was come to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. 12 For before that certain came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they were come, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing them which were of the circumcision. 13 And the other Jews dissembled likewise with him; insomuch that Barnabas also was carried away with their dissimulation. 14 But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said unto Peter before *them* all, If thou, being a Jew, livest after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compellest thou the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?*

Here in our text in Romans, Paul levels charges against the Jews for their demands on others while they themselves feel above the law.

21b...*thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?*

The Jews would teach others that it is against God's Law to steal, yet they themselves had no problem with skimming off the top, robbing the widows, cheating people in business transactions, etc.

Paul lists several sins that the Jews vehemently taught against yet they themselves were guilty of committing them: Adultery, Idolatry, Dishonesty.

Are we guilty of the same? We, as Christians, do we go around telling everybody how they need to live but turn a blind eye to our own sinful life?

If I stood up here and taught you that it is a sin to steal but I cheat on my income taxes, doesn't that make me guilty?

If the cashier at the Food City gave me back too much change and I knew it and kept it, isn't that stealing?

If I stood up here and taught you that it is a sin to lie and someone called me up and asked if I could help them with something but I didn't want to, so I made something up to get out of it, isn't that lying?

As a parent, if you teach your kids that cursing is sinful and wrong, but you let out a stream of obscenities when you stub your toe or when something doesn't go your way, what kind of message is that sending?

Do as I Say, Not as I Do Doesn't that make us a hypocrite? That is what Paul is charging the Jews with.

24 *For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.*

Here Paul is quoting from the Prophet **Isaiah 52:5** *Now therefore, what have I here, saith the LORD, that my people is taken away for nought? they that rule over them make them to howl, saith the LORD; and my name continually every day is blasphemed.*

What he is implying is because they claim to be spokesmen of God and teachers of his Holy Laws and statutes yet they themselves do not obey them, then it blasphemes the name of God.

Isn't that what Christians do every single day? How many people do you know that have a Facebook account and claim to be a Christian, but you read their posts where they use profanity and talk about other people, laugh at obscene posts and share memes with profanity or sexual in nature?

Nothing bothers me more than to scroll through someone's social media and read one post that is religious and the next one obscene. "**Praying for you**" in one post and "**blankity blank you**" in the next."

We are just as guilty as the Jews blaspheming God's name when we are living a double standard. The Bible says in **James 1:8** *A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.*

We need to do as James says in **James 4:8** *Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double minded.*

25 *For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.*

26 *Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision?*

27 *And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?*

28 *For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:*

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.*

Now Paul brings up the circumcision. After all, the Jews began with the covenant between God and Abram, the father of the Jews. We first read about circumcision in **Genesis 17:9-14**

9 *And God said unto Abraham, Thou shalt keep my covenant therefore, thou, and thy seed after thee in their generations.*

10 *This is my covenant, which ye shall keep, between me and you and thy seed after thee; Every man child among you shall be circumcised.*

11 And ye shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskin; and it shall be a token of the covenant betwixt me and you.

12 And he that is eight days old shall be circumcised among you, every man child in your generations, he that is born in the house, or bought with money of any stranger, which is not of thy seed.

13 He that is born in thy house, and he that is bought with thy money, must needs be circumcised: and my covenant shall be in your flesh for an everlasting covenant.

14 And the uncircumcised man child whose flesh of his foreskin is not circumcised, that soul shall be cut off from his people; he hath broken my covenant.

Ever since that covenant, everyone that is considered a Hebrew, Israelite, or a Jew had to be circumcised. **It was a symbol of being separated from the world and unto God.** This was God's way of placing a mark on Abram and his people that distinguished him and his descendants from the heathen pagan people.

Sadly, this circumcision became an idol to the Jewish people. They even referred to themselves as the **people of the circumcision**. It made them feel superior to everyone else.

Circumcision was such a big deal for the Jews that even when they began believing in Christ and became Christians, they could not break away from the circumcision. There were some that claimed that even if a person believed in the Lord Jesus Christ they could not be saved unless they were circumcised.

The debate over it became so heated that a council had to be formed to set forth laws concerning Christianity and what was and wasn't necessary. You can read about it in Acts chapter 15. I'm not going to read it all but only the first 2 verses:
Acts 15:1-2 And certain men which came down from Judaea taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved.
2 When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem unto the apostles and elders about this question.

If you read the rest of the chapter you will see that this "**Jerusalem Council**" with the James, the Lord's brother heading the council, got together, and decided among themselves that the Gentiles did not have to go through the circumcision, that Christ and Christ alone brought salvation.

But this was something that Paul had to contend with his whole preaching career. The Jews that just could not accept that someone could be saved unless they were circumcised or followed the Laws of Moses.

In Paul's letter to Titus (whom is believed to be the pastor of the Church at Crete) he instructs him concerning the qualifications of an Elder and he starts listing off things to watch out for and he suddenly says: **Titus 1:10-11** For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, **specially they of the circumcision:**
11 Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake.

Here in Romans Chapter 2, Paul is using the Jews pride concerning circumcision, against them. **He points out a circumcised Jew that breaks God's laws is no better than an uncircumcised Gentile.**

Circumcision was intended to be a symbol of the Jews separation unto God but that was just an outward symbol. If they were truly God's people they would be **circumcised in the heart and Spirit** which is a sign of what is on the inside, not the outside.

How many pretend Christians are there today? They put on a good act. They look and dress the part. They talk the talk but they don't walk the walk. They take pride in their outward appearance but inside they are filthy and rotten.

Are we guilty today of being as the Jews were? Jew As I Say, Not As I Jew? In our case it would be: Do As I Say, and Not As I Do.