

Chapter Twenty-five
Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans
**The Condemnation of the Religionist for Misplaced Faith
Hypocrisy: Professing One Thing While Doing Another**

“¹ What advantage then hath the Jew? or what profit *is there* of circumcision? ² Much every way: chiefly, because that unto them were committed the oracles of God. ³ For what if some did not believe? shall their unbelief make the faith of God without effect? ⁴ God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged. ⁵ But if our unrighteousness commend the righteousness of God, what shall we say? *Is* God unrighteous who taketh vengeance? (I speak as a man) ⁶ God forbid: for then how shall God judge the world? ⁷ For if the truth of God hath more abounded through my lie unto his glory; why yet am I also judged as a sinner? ⁸ And not *rather*, (as we be slanderously reported, and as some affirm that we say,) Let us do evil, that good may come? whose damnation is just” (Romans 3:1-8).

The concluding statements of Romans 2:28-29 define what a true Jew is. The definition is true of a Christian as well.

“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” (Romans 2:28-29).

The intent of Romans 2:28-29 assumes an un-debatable truth, i.e. that which constitutes a Jew in the true sense of the word. That which makes a Jew is not outward conformity to religious rituals and moral Laws. A true Jew is one inwardly and spiritually before anything else. Like being a Christian, the outward life is the natural fruit of an inward reality. Being a Jew (like being a Christian) is nothing but an empty bag of dead men’s bones without the inward spiritual reality of being “born again.”

Christ condemned the hypocrisy of those who professed to be Jews, but were only Jews outwardly. That does not mean He condemned the Law they lived by. He gave that Law to them. He condemned them for thinking that Law keeping made them right with God. He condemned them for trusting in their own self righteousness. Their outward lives were in order, but there was no inward reality.

“²³ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone. ²⁴ *Ye* blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. ²⁵ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. ²⁶ *Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. ²⁷ Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men’s* bones, and of all uncleanness. ²⁸ Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity” (Matthew 23:23-28).

Hypocrisy keeps people from a genuine faith in Christ. Hypocrisy is role playing, like a little girl who dresses up in mommy’s make-up and cloths. The Religionist looks at other professing Christians and begins to *play the role* of a Christian. He learns to talk God-talk. He begins to do what other Religionists expect of him. He comes to church, reads his Bible, gives his money and may even try to witness.

The Religionist believes in God, but has been *sidetracked* by substitutes for a real relationship with Christ. He can be sidetracked by attending Church services. He thinks that is what makes him a believer. He can get sidetracked by religious service. He thinks that is what defines him as a true believer. Before any of these things matter to God, a person must have a real inner relationship with the Lord Jesus. If the inner relationship is not real, the outward works are just role playing (hypocrisy).

Perhaps the life of king David best exemplifies this truth. David was a sinner. He committed some horrendous acts of selfishness. Yet God said David was a man after His own heart (Acts 13:22). David was not a hypocrite just because he lost some spiritual battles and fell into sin. He was real because when he sinned he went to God with those sins. He was a man after God's heart because David knew and recognized what he was inwardly. He did not measure himself by what he was outwardly in the eyes of others.

The Religionist is condemned because he trusts in his outward façade justifying himself before God and others. The "advantage" of the Jew in the matters of truth is taken for granted (Romans 3:1). "Salvation is of the Jews" (John 4:22). With advantage comes responsibility. Like all Christians, the Jew was given the responsibility to safeguard and promote the truth of God.

"And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit thou to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (II Timothy 2:2).

The Jew had "advantage . . . much every way." This singular advantage expanding in every direction was centered in the fact Israel was chosen of God to be the nation of revelation. They had the prophets of God and the promise of Messiah through the tribe of David.

"What if some did not believe" (Romans 3:3)? What if some would misplace their faith in something or someone other than Christ? This is exactly what happened. The central purpose of every Jewish ritual sacrifice or holy day was to keep them focused on the coming of Messiah and His fulfillment of the Law for them at His coming. They had lost that focus and, in turn, misplaced their faith by trusting in the ritual and their own self righteousness. Resultantly they were lost and without faith in God's eyes.

Does the Religionist's lack of faith nullify God's covenant promise to those who genuinely believe (Romans 3:3b)? Does the Religionist's misconceptions and false beliefs cause God to change His plan of salvation? Does his misunderstanding force God to broaden His gospel to overlook these false beliefs as the Religionist trusts in his own religiosity? God's means of salvation does not change simply because someone misrepresents that means (the gospel).

If God is not consistent in His dealings, there is no real foundation for faith (Romans 3:4). God is consistent in truth. Therefore, we can fully rely on His revelation of the gospel. If God is not consistent in truth, there is no basis to believe anyone will be saved and overcome His judgment on mankind. The central point of Romans 3:4 is that the hope of the gospel is found in the revelation that God is constant, reliable and unchanging.

⁵ And I will come near to you to judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers, and against the adulterers, and against false swearers, and against those that oppress the hireling in *his* wages, the widow, and the fatherless, and that turn aside the stranger *from his right*, and fear not me, saith the LORD of hosts. ⁶ For I *am* the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed" (Malachi 3:5-6).

Since God is unchangeable and consistent in truth, it becomes a matter of human responsibility to seek that unchanging truth (and unchanging One) and to move away from any man made misrepresentation of God's truth. The believer's only hope of justification, when he stands before the judgment of God (the Judge), is having obeyed the truth. The truth of the gospel is that all men are condemned sinners (regardless of how good they appear outwardly) bound for a Christless eternity in the torments of Hell. Mankind's only hope is repentance of sin and self righteousness and faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ.

Our sin (“unrighteousness”) magnifies God’s righteousness (Romans 3:5). Man’s attempts at self righteousness come so short of God’s righteousness (Romans 3:10 and 23) that those attempts only magnify the enormous distance between the two (the man who thinks himself righteous apart from the work of Christ magnifies both his ignorance of righteousness and his ignorance of God). Is God therefore unrighteous (unfair) because He acts upon the great difference between man’s acts of righteousness and His righteousness?

How many times have you heard someone say they cannot believe in a God Who would send a person to Hell? Is God unrighteous because He takes vengeance on the person who thinks he can be as righteous as God is righteous?

If there is no absolute standard of right and wrong, what is the basis of judgment (Romans 3:6)? Is God unrighteous because He condemns self righteousness? The “my lie” of verse 7 refers back to what Paul says in verse 4 and refers to man’s claim to righteousness through obedience to the Law (a theological and moral falsehood).

Because Paul taught salvation was purely of grace and completely apart from religious works received only through faith in the finished work of Christ (there was no sin that has not been paid for; Romans 8:1), he was accused of Antinomianism (Romans 3:8). This referred to teaching that the more a person sinned, the more grace he would receive and the more God would be glorified in forgiveness. Paul did not teach this.

“For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

“¹ Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not. ² Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. ³ And every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himself, even as he is pure. ⁴ Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law. ⁵ And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. ⁶ Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known him. ⁷ Little children, let no man deceive you: he that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as he is righteous. ⁸ He that committeth sin is of the devil; for the devil sinneth from the beginning. For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil. ⁹ Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God. ¹⁰ In this the children of God are manifest, and the children of the devil: whosoever doeth not righteousness is not of God, neither he that loveth not his brother” (I John 3:1-10).

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1. Read Romans 2:28-29. From the context of these verses, define what constituted a true Jew and discuss how that relates to what constitutes a true Christian. _____

2. Read Matthew 23:23-28. Discuss what made these Jews hypocrites. Relate that to all Religionist, especially those who call themselves Christian. _____

3. What makes a hypocrite a hypocrite? _____

4. Discuss why king David best exemplifies the truth that a real believer is defined by his inner relationship with the Lord. _____

5. Read Romans 3:1 and John 4:22. What was the Jews' "advantage"? _____

6. Read 2 Timothy 2:2. Like all true Christians, what was the Jews' responsibility? _____

7. Explain Romans 3:3 in your own words. _____

8. Read Malachi 3:5-6 and explain Romans 3:4 in your own words. _____

9. Explain Romans 3:5 in your own words. _____

10. Explain Romans 3:6 in your own words. _____

11. Discuss the meaning of Antinomianism and why Paul was accused of teaching such a thing. _____
