

THE CONDEMNATION OF THE JEWISH MAN
(Rom. 2:17 – 3:8)

If you are new or visiting; a special warm welcome to you. We trust you enjoy your time with us.

Today we will be having communion. If it is your practice to participate in this we welcome you to join with us in celebrating the Lord's Supper. If this is not your custom or if you are unsure of what to do please just pass the emblems (bread and wine) to the person next to you.

INTRODUCTION

From Rom 1:18 – 3:20, Paul systematically deals with the fact that all men have a need, i.e., the need for a right standing before God.

The Need for Righteousness (Rom.1:18 – 3:20)

The Condemnation of the Pagan Man (1:18 – 1:32)

The Condemnation of the Moral Man (2:1 – 2:16)

The Condemnation of the Jewish Man (2:17 – 3:8)

(a) Unable to be helped by the law (2:17-24)

(b) Unable to be helped by circumcision (2:24-27)

(c) Unable to be helped by nationality (2:28-3:8)

- Because God's call necessitates a change of heart (2:28,29)

- Because God's character necessitates consistency of judgement (3:1- 8)

Having considered the pagan man and the moral man, Paul now turns his attention to the Jewish man – what is his circumstance? After all, doesn't the Jew have a special covenantal relationship with God, isn't he the recipient of the Law and the promises? Doesn't he have a special claim on God's favour? In today's passage, Paul systematically demolishes any and all such arguments.

UNABLE TO BE HELPED BY THE LAW (2:17 – 24)

Paul opens with the phrase, "Now if you call yourself a Jew ---", and then gives a list of five qualities that the Jew of his day typically used to assert his moral superiority over others: "if you rely on the law" (given to them by God), "and brag about your relationship with God" (e.g., special covenants), "if you know his will" (revealed in His word), "and approve what is superior because you are instructed in the law" (spiritually superior knowledge standards), "if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind ---- because you have the law, the embodiment of truth and knowledge". Having listed these five benefits, he then accuses them of inexcusable hypocrisy.

He sums up his argument in v.23 – the Jew brags about the law, but then dishonours God by breaking it!

Paul then quotes from Isaiah 52:5 to confirm the matter –their own prophets spoke of this Jewish hypocrisy, both as breakers of the letter of the law and of the spirit of the law.

Adherence to a written code, of any description, cannot and will not put anyone in right standing with God!!

UNABLE TO BE HELPED BY CIRCUMCISION (2:25 – 27)

The Covenant of Circumcision was given to Abraham in Genesis 17:1-14. God's promise was:

To make Abraham the father of many nations.

To give his descendents the land of Canaan and to be their God.

For their part, every Jewish male was to be circumcised on the 8th day after birth.

This covenant had both a physical and spiritual element to it. It was a physical sign and seal of God's covenant with Abraham's physical descendents. God would be God to Israel and He would give them the land of Canaan.

The Jew, however, saw his circumcision as a rite of passage that somehow possessed inherent virtue or merit of its own. Not so, says Paul, using a theoretical argument. Circumcision only has value if you keep the whole law. To fail at one point, however, is to become guilty of all of it (James 2:10). Since no one is able to keep the whole law, (c.f., the early part of Romans 2), the Jew is as helpless as the gentile. See Gal.6:15 for Paul's conclusion.

