

ROMANS - #2

ANTIOCH BIBLE CLASS

LESSON TOPIC

GOD IS NO RESPECTOR OF PERSONS

SCRIPTURE TEXT: ROMANS 2:1-29

MEMORY VERSE: ROM. 2:11. For there is no respect of persons with God.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter begins with the word “therefore”, which links previous statements to a consequence about to be addressed. It is a “threshold” word that prepares us for the introduction of a valuable perspective on this second chapter. That perspective is as follows. Having declared the unrighteousness and perverted wickedness of the pagan, heathen, idolatrous and God-dishonoring Gentile world, he proceeds with his letter (which when written had no chapter or verse divisions) describing the same unrighteousness of the Jewish world. This chapter will address the sinfulness of the Jews, who so often felt that they possessed an inherent righteousness just because they were the recipients of the law.

A major point Paul makes in chapter two is that the Jew, just because they were the ones to whom the law was given, was no more righteous than the Gentiles who had no law. Paul emphasizes that being circumcised did not make one righteous. The ones who pursued righteous works were thereby honored and the ones who did not were dishonored. God did not respect Jew or Gentile based on their religious advantage or disadvantage, but only on the basis of true righteousness as seen by God.

This perspective is strengthened if you look ahead to chapter 3:9-10, where Paul explains that he has already concluded that both Jew and Gentile are under sin, and that there is none (Jew or Gentile) righteous. “Therefore” this chapter emphasizes the sinfulness of the Jews, just as chapter one emphasized the gross sinfulness of the Gentiles. This perspective will help us apply the things Paul teaches in chapter two. Human flesh, no matter the national origin, is, by virtue of biological transmission, sinful and corrupt. Being born a Jew or a pagan does not change that; only a conversion to the righteousness of God can make that change.

DAILY SCRIPTURES AND THOUGHTS

MONDAY. ROM. 2:1-11. GOD IS NO RESPECTOR OF PERSONS.

SCRIPTURES.

V1. Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another, thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest doest the same things. 2. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. 3. And thinkest thou this, O man, that judgest them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of God? 4. Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness and forbearance and longsuffering; not knowing that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repentance? 5. But after thy hardness and impenitent heart treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God; 6. Who will render to every man according to his deeds; 7. To them who by patient continuance in well doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; 8. But unto them that are contentious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, indignation and wrath, 9. Tribulation and anguish, upon every soul of man that doeth evil, of the Jew first, and also of the Gentile; 10. But glory, honor, and peace, to every man that worketh good, to the Jew first, and also to the Gentile: 11. For there is no respect of persons with God.

COMMENTS.

Having shown the exceeding sinfulness of man's lust and passion as exhibited through carnal, lust-driven ways of the Gentiles, Paul turns now to the Jews who, when motivated by the same kind of lusts, are in no better standing before God than any other. His comparison takes on the following argument.

- V1. If you are guilty of the same conduct as was described in ch. 1, then you have no right to judge them; you are just as guilty as they are.
- V2. Only God is able to determine the guilt or innocence of those who commit lewd, ungodly acts. That is, those who are also in the clutches of sin, of whatever kind, are not qualified to pass judgment on others, no matter how egregious their sins might be.
- V3. The one who is guilty of corrupt conduct has no credibility to judge another.
- V4. If you disregard the goodness of God, what is there to lead you to repentance?
- V5. A hard and impenitent heart only accumulates a record of conduct deserving of righteous judgment.
- V6. For God will base his judgment on the deeds of every single individual, Jew or Gentile.
- V7. The ones who pursue honor, glory and immortality, they will obtain eternal life.
- V8-9. But to others who obey unrighteousness, whoever they are, shall accrue to themselves indignation, wrath and tribulation, whether Jew or Gentile.
- V10. On the other hand, glory, honor and peace accrue to him that worketh righteousness.
- V11. Being a Jew does not give you an advantage over a Gentile, if both pursue the same path of unrighteousness, because God does not respect your person but your character.

TUESDAY. ROM. 2:12-16. YOU WILL BE JUDGED BY MY GOSPEL.

SCRIPTURES

V12. For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; 13. (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified. 14. For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: 15. Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another). 16. In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.

COMMENTS.

- V12-15. Paul continues to emphasize the thought of who is judged and by what standard. He argues that just having heard the law, or having been in the Hebrew family which received the law, does not offer any justification. If, as he asserts, a Gentile obeys the teaching of the law (while not being a beneficiary of the law) it is, nevertheless, to his honor and credit). Conversely, if the Jew who is the beneficiary of the dispensation of the law shall, nevertheless, disobey that law, then he is not free from judgment and wrath. Whether sin is attributed to Jew or Gentile, it is still sin. The very prevalent notion of the Jew having special favors from God, is totally erroneous based upon the totality of scriptural teaching.
- V16. We shall be judged by the principals and teachings of “Paul’s” gospel. “In that day” (the day) of the dispensation of his gospel.

WEDNESDAY. ROM. 2:17-20. SUPERIOR SELF-SUFFICIENCY.

SCRIPTURES

V17. Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, 18. And knowest his will, and approves 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.

COMMENTS.

There is an important reality that is in the context of Paul’s words of instruction regarding the “superior self sufficiency” he sees in the Jews. First, someone has said that it is impossible to mentally enslave a Bible reading people. The Jews were a people who had been taught the precepts of God’s law (which is not to say that they had obeyed it). They had priests whose job it was to instruct them. The process of instruction not only was intended to teach them God’s ways, but it also had the added benefit of a nominal education for them. For example, if you teach the Bible, you will have to involve history, reading and many other valuable daily norms of education.

On the other hand, in the pagan, heathen world of all past centuries, this process of regular instructions, including its many ancillary benefits, was not required or even available. They did not need instructions for their gods; they simply manufactured what they wanted and there was no

structured “curriculum” to impart knowledge to them. Thus one of the deficiencies of heathenism was, in so many realms, gross ignorance. This is seen in the daily process of life. One of the great cities in Paul’s day had a “citizen” population of about 200,000. However the same city had over 500,000 slaves. And there is no question as to the status of these slaves on the register of education.

That is not to say that everyone of every generation were ignorant as to the “excellent” things of life. One of the hall marks of Grecian philosophers was their contribution to the advancement of knowledge in many fields. Even with that, “barbarism” was rampant. You may recall that it was barbaric tribes that over ran and defeated the great Roman Empire.

What you may ask, is the application of this reality of the Jew who, proportionately speaking, lived in a more “educated” culture than their heathen counterparts who were Barbarians. For this lesson that purpose, though not commendable, is that the Jew saw himself as a “superior, self sufficient” class of people. That, at least in part, is what Paul is addressing when he says:

“Thou are called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God. And knowest his will and approves the things that are more excellent, being instructed of the law; and art confident thou art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, and instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes ----”.

Paul is saying that many of the Jews felt they were superior to everyone else and therefore not under sins’ condemnation as the Gentiles were.

THURSDAY. ROM. 2:21-27. GUILTY OF WHAT YOU CONDEMN IN OTHERS.

SCRIPTURES

V21. 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 dishonorest 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 un-circumcision. 26. Therefore if the un-circumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his un-circumcision be counted for circumcision? 27. And shall not un-circumcision which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law?

COMMENTS.

In these verses Paul rails on the Jews who were preaching all areas of righteous conduct but were guilty of committing the very sins they condemned in others. His point is, other than pointing out their hypocrisy, that Jewry, notwithstanding their advantage under the law, were nevertheless, just as susceptible to and guilty of gross sins as the ungodly Gentiles described in chapter one. Just because they had been circumcised when they were only eight days old did not convey any status of righteous conduct to them. Today, in some churches they sprinkle “holy water” on a new baby and proclaim it

forever saved and in good standing with God. That is not scriptural. Paul's argument is that the Jew with fleshly circumcision and the Gentile without it are both in need of the saving power of God. Evidence of this was that the Jews were preaching that people should not steal or lie, etc., and were guilty of committing these same sins.

FRIDAY. ROM. 2:28-29. THE INWARD JEW.

SCRIPTURE.

V28. 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.

COMMENTS.

This chapter deals entirely with the truth that the Jews, just because they were the depository of the law, were no better off before God than the Gentiles. As Paul declares in Rom. 3:9, that he had proven (in chapters 1 & 2) that both Jew and Gentile were under sin. Further, that the Jews were declaring their self sufficiency just because they had God's law, but all the while were committing the same trespasses as those they were condemning.

In verses 28-29, Paul's point of all of this is that the "real" Jew is that one of the heart. That is, a national Jew is not the people of God, but the spiritual Jew, converted by faith in Christ, is the real Jew. He is not a (spiritual) Jew who holds allegiance to the "letter" of the law. Instead it is the Jew whose heart and life is consumed in the spirit of that law, which points them to Christ. It is the Jew whose soul has "obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine which was delivered you. Being then made free from sin, ye became servants of righteousness". (Rom. 6:17-18). It is not a question of national origin or of circumcision or un-circumcision, but a question of an obedient heart unto God.

SUMMARY

In chapter one, we consumed three lessons evaluating and defining the gross sinfulness of the Gentile world. The second chapter deals with the reality that Jews, the nation of God's people who were the beneficiaries of God's law through Moses, were just as foreign and sinful before God as the Gentiles were. This was made even more so, since they were guilty of many of the same acts of sin as the Gentiles. Being an offspring of a Jewish parent and being under the Jewish religion, did not qualify them for eternal life; only a changed and obedient heart unto God would satisfy. Don't boast that you have the law, Paul warned, because you are also guilty of violating the law. We conclude this chapter with both Jew and Gentile perishing in carnal sins and in need of the saving grace of God. The playing field is level before God: both Jew and Gentile have been judged by God as being of a sinful seed. There is none good, no not one.

QUESTIONS

1. What boast were the Jews making of having the law?

2. Describe an “inward” Jew.
3. Why hadn’t their law and circumcision made them right before God?