

(11) "Circumcision of Value": The Need of Inward Transformation (2:25-29)

Romans: The Outwork of the Righteousness of God

Condemnation!—Line of Thought

- Proclaiming a Fact: All Men Are Condemned!
 - The Gentiles Are Condemned due to Sin (1:18-32).
 - The Jews Are Condemned due to Hypocrisy (2:1-5): A Diatribe.
- Answering Expected Questions:
 - Is God Just in This Judgment? (2:6-11)
 - Is God Fair in This Judgment? (2:12-16)
- Resuming the Diatribe (of 2:1-5): Having the Law Is Not Secure.
 - There Is a High Expectation for the Jews (2:17-20).
 - They Failed Tragically and Miserably (2:21-24).
- Answering Expected Questions:
 - Are Not the Jews Secure due to Circumcision? (2:25-29)
 - Is God Faithful if He Condemns the Jews? (3:1-8)
- Conclusion (3:9-20).

Another Knock on the Head

- Having Debunked One Jewish Disillusion, that They Are Secure from God's Condemnation by Having the Law, Paul Went on to Demythologize Another, that They Are Secure by Circumcision.
- **"²⁵ For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision." (Rom 2:25 NAU)**

What Is Circumcision?

- Circumcision = Cutting-off the Foreskin of the Male Reproductive Organ.
- It Is Practiced in Non-biblical Cultures as the Rite of Reaching Adulthood at Age 12-13.
- It Means:
 - Being Allowed to Date, Court, and Marry.
 - Potentially Being Able to Reproduce.
 - Symbolically Having a Life That Bears Fruits.
 - Potentially Being Blessed through Multiplication.

What Is Circumcision?

- In the Jewish Culture, It Is Practiced at the 8th Day after Birth (When the Child Becomes Clean).
- It Means:
 - He Belongs to the Chosen People of God.
 - It Is the Sign of the Abrahamic Covenant.
 - God Will Give Abraham a Land, a Nation, and a Blessing to All Nations through a Seed of Him.
 - He Should Have a (Spiritual) Life That Can Bears Fruits.
 - He Has the Potential of Becoming the Father of the Seed.
 - He Should Bear Spiritual Fruits in God's Character (Mic 6:8), Being in the Firstborn Nation of God (Exod 4:22).

What Is Circumcision?

- Female Circumcision Is External Mutilation of the Female Reproductive Organ So That She
 - Cannot Have Sexual Satisfaction, or
 - Cannot Have Sex unless a Reversal Procedure Is Done.
- It Is Practiced in Backward Pagan Cultures.
 - It Is Evil!
 - It Has No Jewish Connections!
 - It Has No Spiritual Meaning!
- In the Jewish Culture, the Female only Needs to Believe in God, Marry a Jew (Preferably), and Circumcise Her Sons (if Any).

What is Uncircumcision?

- “²⁵ For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.” (Rom 2:25 NAU)
- “Circumcision of Value” =
 - Physical: Belonging to the People of God, thus Having the Law.
 - Spiritual: Listening to the Word, and Obeying the Law.
- “Uncircumcision” =
 - Having the Physical One but Not the Spiritual One.
 - Do Not Have the Spiritual Life That Can Bear Fruits.

The Importance of Circumcision

- When Moses Failed to Circumcise His Sons, God Wanted to Kill Him (Exod 4:24-26).
 - Moses Was Just Called to Be the Deliverer of Israel, the “Firstborn” Nation of God.
 - Israelites Are Marked by Circumcision, Signifying That They Belong to a Community under the Grace of God.
 - Moses’ Hypocrisy May Have Had an Excuse (a Laborer Marrying up the Boss’ Daughter), but Not Any More after the Calling on Mt. Sinai.
 - His Deeds Must Be Consistent with His Words!

The Symbolic Meaning of Cir.

- OT Taught Consistently That the External Circumcision Is Meant to Remind an Internal One.
 - ¹⁶ So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer. ¹⁷ For the LORD your God is the God of gods and the Lord of lords, the great, the mighty, and the awesome God who does not show partiality nor take a bribe. ¹⁸ He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. ¹⁹ So show your love for the alien, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt. ²⁰ You shall fear the LORD your God; you shall serve Him and cling to Him, and you shall swear by His name." (Deut 10:16-20)
 - The Circumcised Heart Leads the Body to Obey the Law.

The Symbolic Meaning of Circumcision

- To Have One's Heart Circumcised, He Must First Circumcise His Ears:
 - ⁹ Thus says the LORD of hosts, "They will thoroughly glean as the vine the remnant of Israel; Pass your hand again like a grape gatherer Over the branches. ¹⁰ To whom shall I speak and give warning That they may hear? Behold, their ears are closed (Lit: Uncircumcised) And they cannot listen. Behold, the word of the LORD has become a reproach to them; They have no delight in it." (Jer 6:9-10)
 - The Circumcised Ears Lead One to Listen to the Word.

The Symbolic Meaning of Circumcision

- The Result of Circumcised Ears and Heart Is a Personal Holy Life.
 - ³⁰ But Moses said before the LORD, "Behold, I am unskilled in speech (Lit: Uncircumcised of Lips); how then will Pharaoh listen to me?" (Exod 6:30)
 - ⁵ Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts." (Isa 6:5)

The Equality in Salvation

- A Gentile Could Be Saved by Obeying the Law
 - “²⁶ So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?” (Rom 2:26)
 - “Uncircumcised man” = a Gentile
 - “Keeps the Requirements of the Law”
 - Not Saying that There Actually Are Such People.
 - Hypothetically Situation: There Is a Possibility, though Zero Probability for Anyone to Keep It All.
 - “Regarded as Circumcision”: Being Accepted as the People of God, Having the Life of God within.

The Equality in Salvation

- Righteous Gentiles Could Be Judging the Jews.
 - ²⁷ And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter *of the* Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law? (Rom 2:27)
 - The Righteous Will Judge the Unrighteous.
 - The Jews Believed that They Are the Righteous Naturally through Physical Circumcision.
 - Paul Says That the Standard of Righteousness Is Obeying the (Whole) Law, Nor Simply Having It.
 - “Having the Letter of the Law” = Knowing the Law of Moses.
 - “Transgressor of the Law” = Not Obeying All of It Consistently.

What Is a True Jew?

- A Physical Jew Is Not Necessarily a Spiritual Jew.
 - ²⁸ For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.
(Rom 2:28)
 - A True Jew Is One Who Is Not Only Physically Circumcised, but also Spiritually Circumcised.
 - Having the Law.
 - Listening to the Word.
 - Obey the Law Consistently.
 - Knowing That He Is Accepted by Grace, Not by Merit.

What Is a True Jew?

- A Gentile Who Has the Internal/Spiritual Circumcision Is a Spiritual Jew.
 - ²⁹ But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God. (Rom 2:29)
 - A Saved Gentile Is Spiritually Circumcised.
 - The Heart Knows the Lord Personally, and Is Grateful.
 - The Ear Is Opened to Listen to the Word.
 - The Life Is Changed to Conform to the Spirit of the Law.
 - The Holy Spirit Is the Circumciser (Regenerator).
 - He Is Not a “True Jew” Physically, but Is a One Spiritually.

Lessons and Applications

- The External Acts in the Bible on the Jews Are All Object Lessons Leading to a Spiritual Lesson for Believers of All Ages from All Nations, including the Christians.
- Let Us Be Circumcised in the Heart, Ear, and Lips (Life)!
- God Included the Gentiles into the People of God in the Spirit, and Will Lead the Jews to the Same Goal.