

Romans 2:17-29

Opening Thoughts

1. What are some customs or traditions that are important to you and/or your culture?
2. How do you respond when someone says one thing, but does the opposite of what they said they were going to do?

Read Romans 2:17-29

Into the Passage:

3. Who is Paul focusing on in this passage? Why?
4. According to verses 17-20 what does it mean to be a Jew (or its privileges)?
5. What contradictions in the Jews actions does Paul point out in verses 21-24?
6. As a believer today how do verses 23-24 impact us?
7. What is the purpose of including verses 25-27 talking about circumcision?
8. What does it mean to have “circumcision of the heart by the Spirit”?
9. What can you learn about obedience from these verses?

Moving Forward:

10. Are your actions and words consistent or would they turn people away from wanting to know God?
11. Are you seeking praise from God or man?
12. Who or what is ruling your life (i.e. God, sin, people, relationships, work, etc.)?
13. How can you work to be consistent and sincere in your attempt to live by God’s standards and proclaim truth?

Life Together:

14. In what ways can you positively impact others around you this week?
15. Pray for one another – specifically that we can be consistent in our actions and draw others to Christ.

Romans 2:17-29 - Some Leader's Notes

These notes are primarily for the Into the Passage portion, and are to be used just as guidelines or commentary notes. Don't place too much focus on them, and let the Bible study discussion lead primarily from the passage itself.

And MAKE SURE you have PLENTY of time at the end to share and pray for one another. OK?

Into the Passage

3. Who is Paul focusing on in this passage? Why?

Paul is focusing on the Jews. Here's a good explanation taken from the ESV Study Bible

Romans provides the fullest expression of Paul's theology, though it is doubtful that he intended it to be a complete summary statement. For example, Romans lacks any detailed treatments of Paul's doctrine of Christ (see Phil. 2:6-11; Col. 1:15-20), of the church (see Ephesians), or of last things (see 1 Thess. 4:13-5:11; 2 Thess. 2:1-12).

It is more likely that Paul wrote the letter to address particular issues of concern to the Roman church. Specifically, he addressed matters of interest for a church that included both Jewish and Gentile Christians: (1) Can one be right with God through obeying the law (Rom. 1:1-3:20)? (2) What can be learned from Abraham, and is he the father of both Jewish and Gentile Christians (4:1-25)? (3) What role does the law play with reference to sin (5:20; 7:1-25)? (4) What does the salvation of Gentiles indicate about the future of Israel as God's people (9:1-11:36)? (5) Should Christians observe OT food laws, and how should they relate to fellow believers on such matters (14:1-15:13)?

The focus on Jew-Gentile issues suggests that tensions existed between Jews and Gentiles in the church in Rome. The Roman church probably began as a Jewish church, though it is not known exactly when it was established. Perhaps Jews from Rome returned from Jerusalem after Pentecost (Acts 2:10) and founded the church, or perhaps the church was established later.

4. According to verses 17-20 what does it mean to be a Jew (or its privileges)?

Part of the identity of the Jews was that they were God's chosen people, the ones who held the Law and knew the way to salvation. There is great power in being called God's chosen people.

5. What contradictions in the Jews actions does Paul point out in verses 21-24?

Paul is not saying that all Jews were involved in hypocrisy, but this line of rhetorical questioning is meant to challenge the Jews on how much they were indeed living up to being God's chosen people. Was their lifestyle evidencing God's glory? Were they concerned merely with other people's actions, or were they also convicted about their own lives.

6. As a believer today how do verses 23-24 impact us?

There is a tendency for us to see ourselves as owners of salvation. A certain privilege. Though without humility and grace it becomes very difficult to evangelise. Realising that we are objects of God's grace puts us in a place of humility. It should then change the way we live, and how God is displayed in our lives.

7. What is the purpose of including verses 25-27 talking about circumcision?

Paul wanted to highlight that the outward symbol of circumcision was to reflect the inward circumcision of the heart. That a Jew is not defined by just what is outward, but being a person of God meant something more.

8. What does it mean to have "circumcision of the heart by the Spirit"?

Circumcision of the heart is done by the Spirit. Where you know that your identity is from the Spirit of God. If circumcision is an outward sign of being set apart from this world, circumcision of the heart means that the inward reality of holiness defines your life.

9. What can you learn about obedience from these verses?

I think you guys can answer this yourselves. :P