

THE JEWS AND THE LAW

Romans 2:17-24

17. "Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God."

People who are evil are destined for Hell and the Lake of Fire. Those who think that they are good enough so that they don't need God are also destined for Hell. And, if you are sitting there relying on the fact that you are highly religious and faithfully attend services and support the church, then you are destined for Hell too!

We don't get saved by being evil! We don't get saved by being good! And we don't get saved by being religious! Romans 10:9 says, "That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

The Jews were the religious people of Paul's day, and Paul strongly warned them that their religious activities wouldn't save them any more than would the ethical activities of non-religious men.

Many of our churches today are filled with men and women who have the same attitude as the Jews of Paul's day. They have ritual without redemption, works without worship, and form of service without the fear of God in its proper sense. They thus come under the condemnation of God!

The Jews of Paul's day were a proud people. And they were right to be proud of their position because God had chosen them. But they were proud in the wrong way, as if they had made the choice instead of God.

18. "And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;"

Don't ever let anyone belittle the Old Testament scriptures to you as if they were somehow a "second class" part of the Bible. They are the Word of God! In II Timothy 3:16, Paul wrote specifically about the Old Testament scriptures when he said, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:"

The Old Testament pointed towards the need for the crucifixion of Christ. The Gospels tell the story of that crucifixion. And the Epistles tell us the results of that crucifixion. The whole Bible is tied together as a whole, focused on Christ crucified. No part is dispensable.

Peter wrote in II Peter 1:21, "For the prophecy came not in

old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost."

The Lord Jesus Christ believed in the verbal inspiration of the Old Testament! He founded all His teaching upon it. He based the whole of His teachings about the question of life after death on a single word in the book of Exodus. God had not said, "I was the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." God said, "I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." In Matthew 22:32 and also in Mark 12:27, Jesus used a tone of triumph: "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living."

"I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob."

Also notice what Jesus said to the woman of Samaria in the famous conversation which took place at Jacob's well. He had offered her salvation, and she had revealed her spiritual ignorance. In order to awaken her to her need, He told her to call her husband. When she replied that she had no husband, Jesus told her the story of her life in the single phrase of John 4:18, "...thou has had five husbands; and he whom thou now hast is not thy husband."

She quickly changed the subject, like most people do when the conversation about their souls comes close to the stinging reality of sin. She tried to put Him off with a fancy theological question; the Jews said that the only place to offer a sacrifice was at the Temple in Jerusalem. But the Samaritans practiced their religion on Mt. Gerizim in Samaria. Who was right?

In John 4:22, Jesus replied, "Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews." The Lord Jesus associated Himself with the Jews and with the Old Testament revelation. He denied that the Gentiles had any knowledge of the truth. And, he appealed to the Old Testament as the supreme authority in the matter in question: the phrase, "salvation is of the Jews" was directly based on the prophecy of Isaiah 2:3.

Yes! The Jews did have the gift of the Old Testament scriptures and they were God's chosen people. But they did not use the gift and they despised God's choice. They despised it to the point where God heaped upon them the accusation of Romans 2:24, "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written."

19. "And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,"

Confidence is important, but it must be placed in the right object. Our confidence must be placed in God, not in ourselves.

When Hudson Taylor, the famous missionary, first went to China, it was on a sailing ship. Very close to the shore of cannibal islands the ship was becalmed, and it was slowly drifting shoreward. The cannibals were eagerly anticipating a feast.

The captain came to Mr. Taylor and asked him to pray for God's help. "I will," said Taylor, "provided you set your sails to catch the breeze." The captain declined to make himself a laughing stock by unfurling in a dead calm. Taylor said, "I will not undertake to pray for the vessel unless you will prepare the sails." And so it was done.

While engaged in prayer, there was a knock at the door of his stateroom. "Who is there?" The captain's voice responded, "Are you still praying for wind?" "Yes." "Well," said the captain, "you'd better stop praying, for we have more wind than we can manage."

Hudson Taylor placed his confidence in God, and that confidence was amply rewarded!

20. "An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law."

To be an effective teacher, it is especially important that you be more impressed with your subject matter than with yourself. It is also necessary that you be more concerned with the needs of your students than with your own desires.

The Jews of Jesus' day were teachers of the Law, but they were more impressed with their own position as teachers than with the Law they were teaching. They were more concerned that their students respect them as great teachers than that the students should find joy in God's Law.

Sir Humphry Davy was a distinguished chemist of the nineteenth century. When asked late in life what he considered to be his greatest discovery, he replied, "Michael Faraday."

Davy had found Faraday, the ignorant son of a blacksmith, taking notes at his lectures and longing to study science. As Davy began to teach young Faraday, he found a brilliant mind that promised to eclipse even his own achievements. He knew

that no one discovery of his could possibly compare with the many discoveries Faraday would make!

21. "Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?"

Knowing the precepts of the Bible is of little value if we don't put them into practice.

In a certain Sunday school the superintendent of the Junior Department was surprised to find that the offering which was placed outside the door of the department room had not been reaching the treasurer. A little checking revealed that one member of the department had been slipping out of the door and pocketing the offerings.

The same boy just a few months before had won the award for learning the greatest number of Bible verses, including the entire Ten Commandments. When confronted with his wrongdoing, he saw no relationship between taking the offerings and the Commandments he had memorized. He had not really learned them: they were only head knowledge, not heart knowledge!

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 dishonourest thou God?"

Boasting is always a dangerous activity. II Corinthians 10:17 & 18 say, "But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

In Geneva, Switzerland there is a quiet old cemetery called Plain Palais. There is a lake in the middle of the cemetery and, on one side of the lake there is a magnificent monument that dominates the entire landscape. It is the tomb of one of the Dukes of Brunswick. I don't know which one, and I really don't care.

On the other side of the lake, covered with grass, and hidden by the shadows of a cypress tree, is a little stone, barely a foot high, with nothing on it but the initials J. C. This stone marks the grave of John Calvin!

John Calvin's theology exalted God and humbled man. His

humble gravestone reflects his theology. Who was the Duke of Brunswick?

"But he that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord. For not he that commendeth himself is approved, but whom the Lord commendeth."

24. "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written."

God wants more than a profession of religion. He wants those who claim His name to possess His power in their lives. In a world where comparatively few people have any convictions at all; in a world where many who do have convictions nevertheless refuse to stand up and be counted; the Lord points out the dire results. The majority of the population comes to ridicule the power of faith in men's lives. They insensibly blaspheme God because He cannot be seen where He wishes to display Himself: in the hearts and lives of those who claim to belong to Him!

If we believe in God, if we trust Jesus as our Lord and Savior, then we must have the courage to stand up and tell others about Him. Courage is not the absence of fear; it is the mastery of it. William Penn, the founder of Pennsylvania, once said, "Right is right, even if everyone is against it, and wrong is wrong, even if everyone is for it."

Let us stand on what's right, and glorify God!

Hallelujah! Amen!

END