

II

Profession but Not Possession

ROMANS 2:17-29

But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God¹⁸ and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;¹⁹ and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—²¹ you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?²² You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?²³ You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.²⁴ For, as it is written, “The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

²⁵ For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision

becomes uncircumcision. ²⁶ So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? ²⁷ Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law. ²⁸ For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. ²⁹ But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.

PSALM 51:1-4

Have mercy on me, O God,
according to your steadfast love;
according to your abundant mercy
blot out my transgressions.

² Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity,
and cleanse me from my sin!

³ For I know my transgressions,
and my sin is ever before me.

⁴ Against you, you only, have I sinned
and done what is evil in your sight,
so that you may be justified in your words
and blameless in your judgment.

READ | ROMANS 2:17–29

THINK ABOUT

Knowing about God does not make you a follower of Jesus. The Jews had much knowledge about God. God chose them to be His people and to make Him known to others. He gave them the law and an outward sign of His covenant with them — circumcision. They would have professed to know God.

Paul makes it clear that what makes someone right with God is not knowledge alone. It is God's work through the cross and His work in a person's heart. God shows us our sin and our need to be forgiven. The Holy Spirit is at work drawing us to Himself and revealing His great love. He then changes our love for self and sin to love for Him.

APPLY

Only God can change hearts. Has He changed your heart yet? If you have placed your faith in Jesus' death and resurrection and surrendered your life to Him, there should be a noticeable difference in you. The Great Physician does heart surgery that transforms your relationship with God. You begin to love Him more than yourself. Your relationship with Him affects the way you talk, the way you treat people, and how you live your life.

Ask yourself, "Have I only made a profession of faith or am I in possession of faith?" Another way to ask that question is, "Am I in possession of my life or have I given Jesus possession of my life?"

ASK

Why do you think some people do not give God control of their lives?

How can you tell when someone is an authentic follower of Jesus Christ?

THE BIG IDEA

The law came through the Jews, and they boasted of the privilege afforded them in the possession of the law. Yet God did not possess them. It is not the possession of the law that matters to God, but His possession of our hearts. The Jews labeled the Gentiles as blind, foolish, ignorant, immature, and sinful. They needed to realize that they were as guilty as the Gentiles they despised.

KEY POINTS

The Jewish perception of superiority is wrong (vv. 17–20).

Jews and Gentiles are equally guilty and condemned (vv. 21–23).

Circumcision and uncircumcision explained (vv. 24–27).

The divine requirement is circumcision of the heart, not the external procedure according to Scripture (vv. 28–29).

DOCTRINE

Sin entered the world through the disobedience of Adam (Genesis 3, 1 Timothy 3:14–15). It was **imputed** to all at conception (Psalm 51:5, Romans 5:12–21) and therefore impacts every person completely. All mankind is **depraved** and acts upon the condition of the heart.

LIFE APPLICATION

While the Jews are God's chosen people, they are not superior to Gentiles.

Jews and Gentiles are equally guilty and need God's grace and forgiveness.

Keeping the law could not save, and external circumcision was inadequate.

DISCUSSION

Is it possible for some persons to be “bigger” sinners than others?

Why was circumcision of the heart more important than external circumcision?

Why is it difficult to admit guilt? How have you seen this in your life?

“PROFESSION BUT NOT POSSESSION”

Romans 2:17-29

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