"FIRST THINGS FIRST!"



(Matters of Priority)

Romans 2:17-29

HRM 3-11-2023

INTRODUCTION:

***To be truly right with God, we must be concerned about matters of priority!**
(We must put first things first!)

I. FIRST <u>YOURSELF</u>, THEN OTHERS (v. 17-25)
(<u>Introspection</u> [of self] must come before inspection [of others])

2 Questions to ask yourself:

A. Before you instruct others, ask yourself:
"Do I <u>teach</u> myself?" (v. 17-21a)

B. Before you point out sin in others, ask yourself:
"Am I <u>guilty</u> myself?" (v. 21b-24)

II. FIRST <u>INTERNALS</u>, THEN EXTERNALS (v. 25-29)
(Be right on the <u>inside</u>, before you worry about the <u>outside</u>)

A. Internal Righteousness is <u>the true measure of spirituality</u> (v. 25-29a)

1. True spirituality is an <u>obedient heart</u> (v. 25-27)

2. True spirituality is a <u>clean heart</u> (v. 28-29a)

B. Internal Righteousness is <u>what truly pleases God</u> (v. 29b)

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(Be right on the _____, before you worry about the _____)

A. Internal Righteousness is the true measure of _____ (v. 25-29a)

1. True spirituality is an _____ heart (v. 25-27)

2. True spirituality is a _____ heart (v. 28-29a)

B. Internal Righteousness is what truly _____ (v. 29b)

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11/10/2019

INTRODUCTION:

Paul in Romans 2 is knocking out the supporting legs of the chair that a "moral" Jew would confidently rest (rely) on for his salvation:

Leg #1 -In 2:1-4, the leg of self-righteousness is knocked away.

Leg #2 - In 2:5-16, the leg of favoritism (partiality at the Judgment) is knocked away.

Leg #3 - In 2:17-24, the leg of the Law is knocked away.

Leg #4 - In 2:25-29, the leg of externalism (the rite of circumcision and the name "Jew") is knocked away!

***To be truly right with God, we must be concerned about matters of priority! (We must put first things first!)**

I. FIRST YOURSELF, THEN OTHERS (v. 17-25)
(Introspection [of self] must come before inspection [of others])

It comes natural to put ourselves first when we should not, and to not put ourselves first when we should.

Matters in which we should not seek first: EX - first in line, first in fame, first to be served, in first place. This is pride. Remember: "The first will be last and the last first."

A matter in which we should seek to be first is the matter of self-examination.

It's easy to see saw dust in other's eyes and to miss the logs or planks in our own (Mt. 7:3-5).

Applying God's truth to yourself must come before applying it to others.

2 Questions to ask yourself:

A. Before you instruct others, ask yourself:
"Do I teach myself?" (v. 17-21a)

Verses 17-20 form a string of conditional clauses begun in verse 17 ("Behold" - lit. "Now if") and concluding in verse 21, which gives the apodisis. (Explain v.21a)

V. 21

"Another" = the Greek has 2 words meaning "another" -

1. "Another of the same kind" ( )

* 2. "Another of a different kind ( )
This person views those he instructs as being different than himself. He sees them as inferior, and is deceived into thinking he towers high above them.

V. 17

1) It's not enough to have a name, if that's all you have (v. 17a)

2) It's not enough to lean on the Law, if you fail to see how it applies to you (v. 17b)

The purpose of the Law is not for someone to rest (lean or rely on), but it was to show you your sin (Rom. 3:20).

3) It's not enough to take pride in knowing about God, if you really don't know Him. (v. 17c)

4) It's not enough to know what God wants for others, if you don't know what He wants from you. (v. 18a)

5) It's not enough to have high standards for others, if you don't impose those same standards upon yourself. (v. 18b)

V. 18b

"Approvest" = to approve after testing or examining.

We are to prove "what is acceptable unto the Lord" (Eph. 5:10).

--We must examine priorities in life, but then make them your priorities.
--We are to test doctrine, but then make it part of ourselves.

--We are to perceive the superior way of living the Christian life, but then obey it!

6) It's not enough to <u>show</u> others the <u>right way</u>, if you are not going there yourself. (v. 19)

ILLUS: of a woman, who went out witnessing (soul-winning) but was never saved herself (She was convinced that the Gospel was needed, but was never convicted that <u>she needed it</u>).

V. 19

NOTE: the self-confidence.

This person has persuaded himself (deceived himself) into thinking he can guide (lead the way) for the spiritually blind, and be a light for those (outside of himself) who are in darkness.

Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, calling them "blind guides" (mt. 23:16, 24). He asked: "Can the blind lead the blind? Shall they not both fall into the ditch?" (Lk. 6:39)

V. 20

7. It's not enough to <u>correct the spiritual ignorance</u> of others, if you are ignorant yourself (v. 20)

"Instructor" = a combination of a teacher and disciplinarian (a school master).

"Foolish" = the unthinking or ignorant.

"Babes" - spiritual infants

No teacher is a good teacher unless he has first learned the lesson he is giving.

"Form" = outward form; outline.

This person has the outer shell of truth, but lacks the real substance.

The letter (legalism), but not the Spirit (love) of the Law.

The Pharisees were expert teachers but rotten examples (mt. 23:3).

God is not saying that it is wrong to instruct others, but simply to instruct yourself first!

Beware of Pharisaical Preachers:

--Paul warned Timothy: "Take heed to thyself (Yourself) and to the doctrine (teaching)..." (I Tim. 4:16)

--Paul warned the Ephesian Elders: "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock..." (Acts 20:28)

Beware of Pharisaical Parenting:

Parents who say to their children:

--Don't drink, smoke, or take drugs - must have clean temples themselves.

--Don't hang around with bad company - must fellowship with God's people themselves.

--Be faithful to Christ, church, and the Bible - must be just as consistent themselves.

Beware of Pharisaical marriages:

--A husband who expects submission and willing obedience from his wife must himself be submissive and obedient to his head (I Cor. 11:3)

--A wife who rightly demands love and loyalty from her husband must be loving and loyal (not only in body) but in spirit to her husband.

We are guilty many times of:

1. vicarious (substitutionary) devotions
2. vicarious church attendance
3. vicarious listening
   (we listen to God's Word and seek applications to others rather than ourselves)

B. Before you point out sin in others, ask yourself:
"Am I <u>guilty</u> myself?" (v. 21b-24)

It is ingrained into our sinful human nature to point out sin in others' lives while avoiding our own.

EX: Children -"Daddy, _____ is hitting me."
"Mommy, ____ is talking bad to me."

Reply: "What did you do to start it?"
Usual answer: "Nothing."

1. <u>"Stealing"</u> - (the 8th commandment - Ex. 20:15)

I know you don't rob banks, but do you steal:
--from I.R.S.
--from God (don't give Him His offering)
--from your employer (stealing time, long breaks, etc.)
--from those you borrowed from, but never paid back

2. "<u>Adultery</u>" (the 7th commandment - Ex. 20:14)

Remember, adultery is not only committed in act, but in thought (Mt. 5:27, 28).

3. "<u>Idolatry</u>" (the 2nd commandment - Ex. 20:4)

"Abhorrest idols" - to detest idolatry.

The idea is to become sick at the thought of idolatry.

Before the Babylonian captivity, the Jewish nation went a-whoring after idols; however, after the exile, she never returned to it.

V. 22

"Sacrilege" - 2 possibilities:

a. <u>Traders</u> in the temple (jn. 2:14)

The idea is "who do you think you are who is zealous against idolatry,and yet your worship money in God's temple?"

b. Robbers of heathen temples

The idea is: "Who do you think you are, who hate the idolatry that goes on in pagan temples, yet you dare to set foot into their temples without fear of pollution, for selfish gain?"

Someone who knows what is right, yet does what is wrong:

1. Dishonors God (v. 23)

Today, a major reason why people have a low regard or disrespect for the Bible is because they see those who claim to be Christians not obeying it. They don't see how it has changed your life. God is honored when His word is obeyed.

2. Gives the enemies of God cause to blaspheme (v. 24)

God's name (reputation) is profaned.

Ex: David's adultery (II Sam. 12:14 - Nathan said to David, "By this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme").

EX: God's merciful patience toward Israel time and time again was for His name's sake. (Ezek. 20:9, 14, 22, 39, 44 - cp. Ezek. 36:22, 23).

"The pagan Gentiles had daily contact with the Jews in business and other activities, and they were not fooled by the Jews devotion to the Law. The very law that the Jews claimed to obey only indicted them." (Wiersbe, p. 520).

If the Jews that Paul was addressing would have taken inventory of themselves, they would have seen what was missing, and would have asked God for His mercy and grace.

God is not calling on you to examine yourself so that you will live with a guilt complex, but so that you would see your own weakness and spiritual sickness, and come to Him for His medicine (the grace of Christ).

II. FIRST INTERNALS, THEN EXTERNALS (v. 25-29)

(Be right on the inside, before you worry about the outside)

ILLUS: I recently looked at a house for sale that had a decent exterior, but a rotten interior (it was not worth half of the $280,000 the owner was asking for it).

It is sinful human nature for people to be this way.

God never condemned externals, He condemned externals without internals.

SEE Matt. 23

A. Internal Righteousness is the true measure of spirituality (v. 25-29a)

1. True spirituality is an obedient heart (v. 25-27)

V. 25

"Circumcision" (that mark of distinction for a Jew) would profit if he practiced the Law he preached; otherwise it is worthless.

"The Jews depended on this physical mark instead of the spiritual reality it represented (Deut. 10:16; Jer. 9:26; Ezek. 44:9) (Wiersbe, p. 521).

I believe in external standards -
EX: short hair on men (I Cor. 11:14)
modest dress for women (I Tim. 2:9)

Someone can be externally right without being internally right, but you will never be internally right without eventually being externally right.

God commands external standards just as He did circumcision for the Jew (Lev. 12:3). However, don't think you are spiritual simply because you keep a few externals; God wants to give you an obedient heart.

In verses 26-27, Paul shows how it is possible for an uncircumcised Gentile to keep the Law's weightier requirements, even though he did not have the written law code!

In the same way that uncircumcision is "by nature" (v. 27, Gentiles by "nature" have the work of the Law written in their hearts (v. 14, 15)

"That which proves spirituality is obedience from the heart.

Believers today are external participants in:

--Baptism - but often are not living out what that baptism symbolized (death to old life and new life in Christ)

--The Lord's Supper - but often are not daily communing with Christ nor remembering what He did for them on the cross.

--Church membership - but often are not active, functional members of that local Body.

2. True spirituality is a clean heart (v. 28-29a)

V. 28

Paul is saying:

A true Jew is not merely a physical descendent of Abraham, nor one who keeps a religious ritual. Real circumcision is not physical.

"Outward" - that which is visible; open to sight or manifest.

In the Law, circumcision didn't merely refer to physical surgery, but god said, "Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiff-necked (rebellious) (Dt. 10:16).

"Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart" (jer. 4:4).

In other words, God called for Israel to separate themselves from sin and hard-heartedness, unto God.

V. 29

True spirituality is to let God cut away the filth of your heart.

Spiritual surgery, not literal (the "letter")

Col. 2:11 - "In whom also ye are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ"

Probably the reason why the Jew chose physical "letter" circumcision over spiritual circumcision is because they didn't want God to touch their lives.

It's the same way today.

People don't mind attending mass once a week, having a few drops of water dropped on their forehead, receiving a round wafer in their mouth, etc.

But if asked: "Will you receive Christ into your heart and life?" they refuse.

"Letter" = a reference to the details of the Law.

As Christians we are to serve: "In the newness of Spirit, and not in the oldness of the Letter" (Ro. 7:6).

"The letter killeth, but the Spirit giveth life" (II Cor. 3:6)

You may be moral on the outside, but how is your heart?

Man sees the outside, but god sees the "thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb. 4:12).

B. Internal Righteousness is what truly pleases God
(v. 29b)

Man applauds and approves of man because of externals.

Jews praised each other for their obedience to the Law, but the important thing is the "praise of God" not man (Wiersbe, p. 521).

The name "Jew" comes from "Judah" which means "praise" (cp. Gen. 29:35, 49:8)

"Men look on outward appearance, but god looks on the heart." (I Sam. 16:7).

I Cor. 4:5 - The Lord will one day "bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God."

A woman's adorning is not to be external but internal. The internal is what is valuable in God's sight (I Pet. 3:3, 4 - "Whose adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel; but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price.")

CONCLUSION:

*To be truly right with God, we must be concerned about matters of priority! We must put first things first!

1. Introspection (of self) must come before inspection (of others)

2. Be right on the inside, before you worry about the outside.