

The Text

Romans 2:17-29 (CSB) Now if you call yourself a Jew, and rely on the law, and boast in God, and know his will, and approve the things that are superior, being instructed from the law, and if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light to those in darkness, an instructor of the ignorant, a teacher of the immature, having the embodiment of knowledge and truth in the law— you then, who teach another, don't you teach yourself? You who preach, "You must not steal"—do you steal? You who say, "You must not commit adultery"—do you commit adultery? You who detest idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? For, as it is written: The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.

Circumcision benefits you if you observe the law, but if you are a lawbreaker, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. So if an uncircumcised man keeps the law's requirements, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? A man who is physically uncircumcised, but who keeps the law, will judge you who are a lawbreaker in spite of having the letter of the law and circumcision. For a person is not a Jew who is one outwardly, and true circumcision is not something visible in the flesh. On the contrary, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is of the heart—by the Spirit, not the letter. That person's praise is not from people but from God.

The Support

As we descend into the end of Romans 3 "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God", Paul has taken every possible argument and pushback from naysayers in his time. How does this apply to us?

We don't practice what we preach--thus we put heavier loads on other people

Romans 2:21a you then, who teach another, don't you teach yourself?...

Matthew 23:3-4 (CSB) Therefore do whatever they tell you, and observe it. But don't do what they do, because they don't practice what they teach. They tie up heavy loads that are hard to carry and put them on people's shoulders, but they themselves aren't willing to lift a finger to move them.

Our own self-righteousness bears witness against yourself

Romans 2:23-29 (CSB) You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? For, as it is written: The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.

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Isaiah 64:5-6 (CSB)

You welcome the one who joyfully does what is right;
they remember you in your ways.

But we have sinned, and you were angry.

How can we be saved if we remain in our sins?

All of us have become like something unclean,
and all our righteous acts are like a polluted garment;
all of us wither like a leaf,
and our iniquities carry us away like the wind.

If we break one law, we have broken the entire law

James 2:10 (CSB) For whoever keeps the entire law, and yet stumbles at one point, is guilty of breaking it all.

Here's the kick to the crotch: you and I are not perfect. You and I are infected with sin. Even when we do things that are good, it is somehow tainted with evil.

And to our little sinful hearts who maybe bent to do the bare minimum, that kinda sucks. That is literally God-awful. To be Christian, you are proclaiming that you worship God who doesn't want empty praise or for you to do a bunch of stuff for him--Christians worship the Creator God of the heavens and the earth who only wants the heart of the worshiper.

Where do you see God in the text? What does the text say about God?

God

God is perfect. Perfect is a over-used term in the English language because we tend to use it subjectively, that is, based on opinion, rather than objectively, that is, based on absolute truth.

Mankind is not perfect. And because of our fall into sin, God gives us his holy law to show just how far we are from sin:

- we teach others to do things we do not do
- we struggle with self-righteousness - trying to earn the blessing, favor, salvation, and love of God
- unfortunately, we have all broken the whole law of God

Again, we can pick and choose what Bible verses we like, and because they require such little effort on our parts, we obey them because they are easy. But our ignorance of the word does not exempt us from judgment.

God is the only God who gives the whole law to be obeyed perfectly who, at the same time, rightfully demands your whole heart. All of your heart and everything in it.

If you can see yourself honestly, you know your heart it is jacked up and have jacked up things in it. But that is what makes the gospel of Christ such good news: God wants your heart and all the sin within it.

The Gospel

Here is the gospel:

Christ does everything in order to save His people from their sins

Christ came to fulfill the law by perfectly obeying God and his law. By being the perfect Son, he is the perfect sacrifice to be the perfect lamb that was slain--by the requirements of what His law required. The blood of animals was not going to save us--only the blood of His Son could do this.

Now that Jesus has completed this, this is the gospel commandment to us:

Matthew 9:13 (CSB) Go and learn what this means: I desire mercy and not sacrifice. For I didn't come to call the righteous, but sinners."

Hosea 6:6 (CSB) For I desire faithful love and not sacrifice, the knowledge of God rather than burnt offerings.

Christ does everything in order to get your heart

Christ wants our heart. Awesome. Now what.

Look at what God does:

Ezekiel 36:25-27 (CSB) I will also sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean. I will cleanse you from all your impurities and all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will remove your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances.

If you grew up in church, you may have heard that passage (or the one like it in Ezekiel 11) more than a few times. Here's what really strikes me about that passage: God exchanges our wicked hearts and *gives us his own heart*.

Adam and Eve sinfully exchange God for something not God.

Christ righteously exchange something not God for God.

But then look at the effects of having a whole new heart:

Ezekiel 36:27 (CSB) I will place my Spirit within you and cause you to follow my statutes and carefully observe my ordinances.

So walk through that loaded statement:

1. God gives you a new heart
2. and then He places His Spirit within you
3. Cause you to follow your statutes
4. and carefully observe my ordinances

Because Christ obeyed God perfectly, we get to live, move, and have our being in that perfection. His righteousness is now our righteousness--if you believe and trust in him.

That is why "his yoke is easy and his burden is light" (Matthew 11:29-30) because Christ took our sin, that we would be righteous in Him (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Can we obey God outside of Christ

Like, we know what the law of God says--for the most part: Ten Commandments, thou shall nots.

What if we are really good about obeying those law and we are really not that bad?

Let me ask this question: can an unbeliever *actually* obey God? Can someone who has no intention of obeying God and taking him at his word can end up, by chance, obeying God?

The simple answer is no.

Let me give this illustration: let us suppose you have two people. One a believer and the other an unbeliever.

Both give to the poor and to the church.

Both read the word of God.

Both go to church.

Both are in small groups at church.

Both preach the gospel.

Both prophesy in the name of God.

Both drive out demons.

Both do many miracles in his name.

Both don't cuss.

All of that.

Look how Christ determines who is with him and who is against him:

Matthew 7:21-23 (CSB) "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven. On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, drive out demons in your name, and do many miracles in your name?' Then I will announce to them, '**I never knew you. Depart from me, you lawbreakers!**'"

What is the difference?

One believed and trust God. One did not.

One received a new heart and the Spirit of God. The other was really good at trying really hard to be a Christian.

Only one's works were obedient to God because the believer has no righteousness apart from Jesus Christ. For the unbeliever, his works are but filthy rags in the sight of God.

Our Responsibility

The call is always to believe and put your trust in God. It is literally the only way you can be saved.

Put all of your hope into Him.

When you do, this is what happens:

John 8:10-11 (CSB)

When Jesus stood up, he said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?"

"No one, Lord," she answered.

"Neither do I condemn you," said Jesus.

Here is the call directly from Christ:

"Go, and from now on do not sin anymore."

Pray

MY BLESSED REDEEMER

Call upon me. Call me to be yours. Give me you. Give me your Spirit. Give me life.

So that I will go and sin no more.

Amen.