

**Sermon Title: The Jew is Under the Sentence of Condemnation, Part 2**

**Sermon Text: Romans 2:25-29**

**Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to guard against self-righteous pride that leads to false security.**

**Sermon Proposition: There are 3 reasons why the Jewish, religious, or covenant people are condemned.**

**III. Practice of national ceremonies will not justify a person. V.25-29**

A. The clarification of the true significance of ceremony. V.25a

Circumcision was a sign and seal of a covenant that God made with Israel.

**Exodus 12:44** "But every man's servant who is bought for money, when you have circumcised him, then he may eat it. **45** "A sojourner and a hired servant shall not eat it **46** "In one house it shall be eaten; you shall not carry any of the flesh outside the house, nor shall you break one of its bones. **47** "All the congregation of Israel shall keep it. **48** "And when a stranger dwells with you and wants to keep the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near and keep it; and he shall be as a native of the land. For no uncircumcised person shall eat it. **49** "One law shall be for the native-born and for the stranger who dwells among you."

The rite or symbol or ceremonies went back to Abraham and the covenant God made with him.

**Genesis 17:10** "This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; **11** "and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. **12** "He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant.

Circumcision became a badge of Jewish identity and, it was thought, to be a guarantee of salvation. Some later rabbis even taught that Abraham sat at the entrance to Gehenna ["hell"] and would not permit any uncircumcised Jew into there, by implication the way you lived made no differences. (Modern day baptism)

Paul declared that circumcision [and by extension baptism] without obedience is empty. Abraham was a man of faith who was accepted by God long before he was circumcised (**Gen. 15:1-20**). The true Jew is one who has spiritual circumcision of the heart.

Centuries later, when for some reason, Moses failed to circumcise one of his sons, his wife, Zipporah, performed the rite herself, thereby protecting Moses from the Lord's wrath (**Ex 4:24-26**).

No doubt this human surgery was symbolic of the sinfulness of man that was passed from generation to generation. The very organ used for reproduction needed to be cleansed of a covering that clings to dirt/filthiness. So that man would know the very center of their nature is sinful and needs cleaning.

B. The clarification of the true significance of obedience.

A few who continually transgressed God's law had no more of a saving relationship to God than an uncircumcised Gentile. The outward symbol was nothing without the inner reality.

While circumcision was important in reference to obedience to God and a reminder of their covenant relationship to God, the ceremony had no spiritual power related to justification, freeing them from judgment.

It is of no value. A Jew who continually transgressed God's law proved that he had no more saving relationship to God than a pagan Gentile, whom Jews often referred to as the uncircumcised.

And rather than freeing Jews from God's law, circumcision made them even more responsible for obeying it, because that ritual testified to their greater knowledge of their sin, of God, and of His will in regard to them.

**Galatians 5:3** And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

Circumcision was a mark of legal obligation.

**Jeremiah 9:25** "Behold, the days are coming," says the LORD, "that I will punish all *who are* circumcised with the uncircumcised-- **26** "Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all *who are* in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. For all *these nations are* uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel *are* uncircumcised in the heart."

God will regard the believing Gentile as favorably as a circumcised believing Jew.

The apostle's point is that the substance of pleasing God is obedience to His will, of which circumcision is but a symbolic reminder.

The declaration that the obedient Gentile who is physically uncircumcised not only pleases God but will figuratively sit in judgment on disobedient Jews. Their faithful obedience will stand as a rebuke to the faithless disobedience to hypocritical Jews.

**Philippians 3:2** Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation!

Theologian Charles Hodge wrote, "Whenever true religion declines, the disposition to lay undo stress on eternal rites is stressed. The Jews when they lost their spirituality supposed that circumcision had power to save them."

The Gentile's humble obedience to the law should serve as a stern rebuke to a Jew who, in spite of his great advantages and blessings, lives in disobedience.

C. The clarification of the true significance of **identity**.

1. Jewish heritage, wonderful as it was, had absolutely no spiritual benefit if it stood alone. V.28a
2. Reemphasize the truth that ceremony is of no value in itself. V.28b
3. The truth is the knowledge of God's law has no power to save a person. V.29

This refers to physical, flesh, blood descendants of Abraham who have been properly circumcised.

**Romans 9:6** But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they *are* not all Israel who *are* of Israel,

**Matthew 3:9** "and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as *our* father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones.

A true child of God; the true spiritual seed of Abraham (see 4:16; cf **Galatians 3:29** *And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.*) Circumcision is that of the heart.

The outward rite is of value only when it reflects the inner reality of a heart separated from sin unto God.

**Deuteronomy 10:16** "Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer.

**Deuteronomy 30:6** "And the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Spirit vs letter – salvation results from the work of God's Spirit in the heart, not men external efforts to conform to his law.