

ROMANS

*A Daily Devotional
Study Guide*



LAKESHORE

FELLOWSHIP

WEEK 4

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Day 1

Study: Romans 2:17-24

Reading: Matthew 15:1-20, John 8:1-11

Memory: Matthew 5:10

As a young pastor, I paid many visits to individuals in our community who needed Jesus. As I would take time to share the Gospel with these individuals, one of the hardest things for them to overcome was the idea that there were people who attended my church who did not live Christ-like lives. Though some of these people had attended my church for years and proudly declared to others how religious they were, their lives were turning people away from God rather than to Him.

Today, we are going to see how the Jews should have been leading people to God, but instead, they were turning others from God.

What Does the Bible Say?

Paul had grown up as an active religious Jew. In Philippians 3, he described how he was one of the leading Jews when it came to keeping all of their religious rules, but through it all he did not really know God. Once he met Christ and was converted, he realized that God had wanted more than just keeping the Law. God wanted a relationship with him and wanted obedience out of love. This transformed Paul's thinking and gave him excellent insight which can be seen in this passage as he challenged those Jews who thought they were children of God because they were born as Jews.

In a very long sentence (verses 17-21), Paul was attempting to get the Jews to see the error in their thinking. The Jewish culture often taught an attitude of superiority rather than one of humility. They believed they were better than the Gentiles and that the Gentiles needed to follow them and do things their way. They viewed themselves as leaders to others and the only people who could help deliver the poor Gentiles from their lost state. They believed they had the truth of God and only they could introduce Gentiles to God, but the Gentiles had to prove themselves worthy. This pervading attitude was on display many times during the ministry of Jesus as recorded in the Gospels, and Jesus often rebuked them for this attitude. It is true that

they were God's chosen people and had been given the Law, but instead of using this position to humbly share the Law with others, they lorded their spirituality over others and used their religion for selfish gain (vs 17-21).

Paul addressed the Jews the same way that Jesus addressed the religious leaders. The Jews put strict rules on everyone else, but they themselves would not often follow their own rules. Their regulations were oppressive to others, while they themselves profited off of their enforcement of their rules. Instead of leading others to God, they were actually pushing people away from God. The Jews were giving God a bad name because of the way they acted, and, instead of being a light to the Gentiles, they were pushing them further into darkness (vs 22-24).

How Does this Apply to Me?

As I read through the passage today, I couldn't help but think that Paul was addressing many of the same issues that are seen in the organized church today. The issues he addressed seem to extend to every group that is called "Christian," even those who claim to believe in the true Gospel. Many times, when Christians receive a bad reputation in society, they want to believe it is because of their beliefs. Sadly, it is often not the Gospel that turns people away, but the hypocrisy of Christians. I am not saying that Christians need to be perfect, because that will never happen, but you need to realize the importance of living out what you say you believe. Just as the Jews were hurting the cause of Christ, there are many people who claim they are believers, yet often live worse than the world because they disguise their evil with the righteous mask of Christianity. It is vital to realize that this can happen to you, especially if you become proud because of your position as a believer. When you start to look down at others because of their sin, you are falling into the trap of the enemy. God wants you to humbly walk with Him on a daily basis, and, as you do, the fruit of the Spirit will shine through you causing you to be the salt and light in this world.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * *Thank God for godly examples that have led you to Him.*
- * *Ask God to help you live what you say you believe.*
- * *Praise God for His grace on your life.*

Day 2

Study: Romans 2:25-3:2

Reading: I Timothy 1:1-12, Matthew 3:7-12

Memory: Matthew 5:10

When I was around 12 years old, my older brother and sisters got the idea of surprising my parents for their anniversary by giving them a portrait of us children. I didn't really care for the idea, especially when the day came to have the pictures taken. I tried everything I could do to get out of the picture, but, in the end, I ended up at the studio having my picture taken. Though my body was there to have the picture taken, my heart wasn't, and it showed in the picture. I wouldn't smile and right before the picture was taken, I made sure I looked sloppy. As I look at that picture today, I laugh at how foolish I was. It also makes me think of how many people have the same attitude towards God, though that is no laughing matter. Many people attend church very faithfully in body and claim to be His followers, but their hearts are not in it.

What Does the Bible Say?

Many Jews wanted to think that they were more special than the Gentiles. It is true that God had chosen the Jewish race to be His special people, but that didn't mean that the Gentiles wouldn't be able to make it to heaven. One of the areas of constant conflict was the act of circumcision. God had established circumcision as a special covenant with Abraham that would set the Jews apart from the rest of the world. Circumcision was an outward act to show they were setting their lives apart for God, but was not meant to be something to show off to others. By New Testament times, circumcision had become a work that a person needed to do in order to be spiritual and have a chance to be part of God's kingdom. This is why Paul declared that circumcision has some value, but is meaningless if you are not striving to follow the whole law out of a love for God (vs 25-27).

The circumcision that is evidence of a true believer isn't a physical circumcision, but an inward choice. A real follower of God is one who seeks to follow God with his whole heart—one who has a sincere love for

and a desire to serve Him. Many of the Jews of that day who claimed that the Gentiles couldn't be believers because they weren't circumcised weren't believers themselves. Outward actions mean nothing to God if a person's heart is not right (vs 28-29).

Paul knew that his readers would want to know why it was important for the Jews to still be circumcised. Paul answered by telling them that the Jews were given special treatment by being given the Word of God. They had the first chance to see what God desired of them and how God wanted to have a relationship with them. They were the first ones who should have accepted Christ, but they didn't (vs 1-2).

How Does this Apply to Me?

Though we may look back at the Jews and think they were foolish because of their emphasis on circumcision, an honest look at the situation will reveal that there are millions of people who fall into the same trap today. People go to church and think they are special and that God will look favorably upon them because of it. They do some good deeds and think that these deeds will earn favor with God. Many who do this think they are spiritually okay, and if they don't heed the warnings in the Word of God, they will have a rude awakening as they stand before God and are cast into an eternal hell. Examine your life to make sure that you are trusting in Christ alone for salvation.

Do you find yourself just going through the act of church, or do you have a love for God that increases every day? Believers can fall into the same trap that the Jews did and begin to think they need to do things to please God. God wants you to serve Him, but He wants you to be motivated by love. Examine your life today to make sure that you are serving for the right reasons.

Suggestions for Prayer

- * Thank God for giving you His Word.
- * Ask God to help you be motivated by love.
- * Praise God because He knows the hearts of men.

Thought for the day

Day 3

Study: Romans 2:17-20, Philippians 3:1-11, Matthew 5:10-14

Reading: Galatians 1:6-24

Memory: Matthew 5:10

Romans 2:17-20

List some of the ways the Jews thought they were better than the Gentiles (vs 17-20)?

Philippians 3:1-11

What did Paul say was safe (vs 1)? Why?

Who did he want them to look out for (vs 2)? Why?

****Dogs were not looked at as cute family pets, but rather as scavengers.*

What do you think is meant by the mutilation of the flesh (vs 2)?

****We will see in the next verses how the Jews placed a great emphasis on circumcision, trying to force the Gentiles to be circumcised. This was only one of the regulations they were trying to force on the Gentiles.*

What do you think that Paul meant when he wrote that "we are the circumcision?" (vs 3)

****The term "circumcision" here was being equated with a true follower of God.*

What are two things that will give evidence that people are true believers (vs 3)?

How did Paul describe his religious zeal when making reference to the days when he was trapped in the dead Jewish religion (vs 4-6)?

Why do you think that so many people want to put confidence in their works when it comes to a right standing before God?

What did Paul realized about all the religious acts that he had done in his own fleshly power (vs 7-8)?

What was more important to Paul than all the religious acts he had done (vs 7)?

What type of righteousness did Paul find truly freeing (vs 9)?

****Here Paul described two types of righteousness. One was a false righteousness that was enslaving and the other was a righteousness that was obtained only through faith. Trying to be righteous in the flesh is a never ending task because it is unobtainable. Being declared righteous by God brings freedom because only He has the ability to forgive sins.*

What was Paul's desire in life (vs 10)?

Matthew 15:10-14

What did Jesus say defiles a person (vs 10-11)?

Why do you think the Pharisees were offended by this (vs 12)?

How did Jesus described the Pharisees (vs 14)? Why?

Personal Application

What can I learn about God from this passage?

How can I apply what I have learned to my everyday life?

Day 4

Study: Romans 2:21-24, Matthew 23:1-36

Reading: Psalm 50:16-20, Isaiah 52:1-12

Memory: Matthew 5:10

Romans 2:21-24

Why was Paul asking questions (vs 21-23)?

What were the Jews and religious people doing (vs 23)?

What happened as a result of what the religious people were doing (vs 24)?

****This is a quote from Isaiah 52:5*

Matthew 23:1-36

Why was Jesus warning his followers against the Pharisees (vs 1-3)?

How is it easy to become like a Pharisee in these actions?

What did they do for others (vs 4)?

What were the motivations for the Pharisees (vs 5-7)?

Why did Jesus not want them seeking titles here on earth (vs 8-10)?

****This doesn't mean that a person should not seek to teach others, but that the motivation for teaching others should be to exalt God and not one's self.*

What attitude did Jesus want his followers to have (vs 11-12)?

How were the religious leaders being a hindrance to others (vs 13)?

Why was it sad that the Pharisees were creating followers (vs 14)?

What were verses 16-22 challenging the religious leaders not to do?

****According to the Pharisees, there were different levels of honesty. If they swore by a certain thing, they felt like they had a right to break their oaths more than if they swore by another thing. Basically, their word could not be trusted and they used the items they swore on as an excuse for them not to keep their word. These were deceptive practices to trick others into giving them what they wanted.*

What did the Pharisees make sure they tithed on (vs 23)?

****They would outwardly give tithes to God and make sure people knew they were giving their percentage of even the smallest little items like spices that they grew. They were extremely picky on certain small things that should not have been a big deal.*

What were they neglecting (vs 23)?

What were they compared to (vs 24)?

What illustration did Jesus use to describe the Pharisees (vs 25)?

What were the Pharisees challenged to do (vs 26)?

What were the Pharisees compared to (vs 27-28)? Why?

What are ways that religious people today can be like this?

What did the Pharisees declare about the prophets (vs 29-30)?

What would they have actually done (vs 31-32)?

How can religious people do the opposite of what God desires (vs 34-36)?

Personal Application

What can I learn about God from this passage?

How can I apply what I have learned to my everyday life?

Day 5

Study: Romans 2:25-26, Genesis 17:9-14, Galatians 2:15-21

Reading: Acts 10:1-33

Memory: Matthew 5:10

Romans 2:25-26

Under what condition would circumcision still be a valuable act for the Jews (vs 25)?

****God wanted Abraham and all of his descendants to be circumcised as an act of obedience to Him. Circumcision is not something that would be public but would be a daily reminder to the Israelites of the covenant that God had made to them.*

Why does circumcision mean nothing if the other rules of God were not being followed (vs 25)?

****Though circumcision is not that big of a deal in our society today, it can be comparable to many Christian acts. The main one that comes to my mind is church attendance. Many people think that attending a church is something that pleases God, but attendance alone is of no value.*

What is more important than outward religious acts (vs 26)?

Why was the statement that Paul made in verse 27 so powerful?

****Jews believed that they were superior to Gentiles, especially when it came to their standing before God. By this statement, Paul was declaring that the Gentiles who believed and obeyed were far better off than the Jews who had been given the Law only to disobey it.*

Genesis 17:9-14

What covenant did God make with the Jews (vs 9-10)?

What would circumcision be (vs 11)?

Why do you think God chose the somewhat strange act of circumcision as the sign of His covenant (vs 11)?

Why do you think God wanted circumcision to take place to babies shortly after they were born (vs 12)?

How long was the covenant supposed to last (vs 13)?

What was the punishment for not being circumcised (vs 14)?

Galatians 2:15-21

How is a person justified (vs 15-16)?

How is a person not justified (vs 16)?

What do you think verses 17-18 meant?

****Since we are jumping into Galatians right in the middle, understanding the context is very important. The Jews accused Paul and the other religious leaders of sinning by eating with the Gentiles. Paul was arguing that it was not sin since they were no longer under the Law or the religious leaders interpretation of the law.*

What do you think Paul meant by being dead to the law (vs 19)?

Instead of living to keep the law, why was Paul living (vs 20)?

If true righteousness came by fulfilling the law, what would the death of Christ mean (vs 21)?

Personal Application

What can I learn about God from this passage?

How can I apply what I have learned to my everyday life?

Day 6

Study: Romans 2:27-29, Acts 16:1-4, Galatians 2:1-14

Reading: Acts 15:1-22, Acts 21:27-36

Memory: Matthew 5:10

Romans 2:27-29

Why will those who are uncircumcised (Gentiles) condemn those who had the Law (Jews) given to them?

What interesting statement does Paul make (vs 28)?

****Paul is not referring to their nationality. By birth, they were children of Abraham, but spiritually, they were not what God desired of Jews.*

Why do you think Paul used the phrase, “circumcision of the heart?” (vs 29)?

Who should you seek praise from (vs 29)?

Why do you think it is important to understand that we need to follow God by the “Spirit, not by the letter” (vs 29)?

****Though the battle about the physical act of circumcision does not exist in our society today, the characteristics of what Paul was battling in the first century church do. The argument today is between those who do religious things and think themselves better because of their outward acts. The challenge is to be living in the Spirit rather than attempting to please God from your flesh.*

Acts 16:1-5

What man did Paul meet on this second missionary journey (vs 1)? What nationality was he?

What did Paul ask Timothy to do (vs 3)? Why?

****Since Timothy was part Jew, and it was customary for Jews to be circumcised, Paul knew it would hinder the Gospel if Timothy was not circumcised.*

What were Paul, Silas and Timothy able to do (vs 4-5)

Galatians 2:1-14

****In this passage, Paul is explaining how he had discussed the issue of Gentiles being circumcised with the apostles in Jerusalem.*

Why did Paul want to meet with the church leaders in Jerusalem (vs 1-2)?

What did Paul not make Titus do (vs 3)?

Why do you think Paul made Timothy get circumcised, but not make Titus do the same?

What type of opposition did Paul face for this choice (vs 4-5)?

How did the apostles confirm that the actions of Paul were correct (vs 6-9)?

What was the only requirement the church leaders gave (vs 10)?

Why did Paul have to stand up against Peter (vs 11-12)?

How were Peter's actions described (vs 13)?

Why do you think this pressure was so strong from the Jews (vs 13)?

Why was it important that Paul stood up to this (vs 14)?

What argument did Paul use (vs 14)? How does this same conflict exist in religious circles today? ****Think about outward actions that are often overemphasized and condemned and that split many believers.*

Practical Application

What can you learn about God from this passage?

How can you apply what you have learned to your everyday life?

Day 7

Reading: Romans 1:15-32

(Take time to read this passage again, letting the truths you have studied this week sink into your mind. You are encouraged to go online and read it through a few times in different versions.)

www.biblegateway.com

Bible Memory

Matthew 5:1 Seeing the crowds, he went up on the mountain, and when he sat down, his disciples came to him. 2 And he opened his mouth and taught them, saying: 3 "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. 4 "Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. 5 "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth. 6 "Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. 7 "Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. 8 "Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God. 9 "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God. 10 "Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.