

Outward Versus Inward Religion

(Rom 2:25-29)

- I. The previous arguments of the Jew defeated by Paul
 - A) “I’m a Jew and not a gentile” (Rom 2:1-11)
 - B) “I’ve got the Law” (Rom 2:12-24)
- II. The last Jewish stronghold: Circumcision (Rom 2:25-29) defeated by Paul
 - A) When pushed, the Jew would retreat from Zerubbabel to Moses, and from Moses to Abraham
 - 1. Matt 3:7-9- John the Baptist understood this
 - 2. John 8:33- “We be Abraham’s seed”
 - B) Because circumcision is older than the Law of Moses, when Law-keeping fails the Jew retreats to circumcision, and Paul pursues
 - 1. Paul pushes them back and forces them to take their stand upon Abraham, and then uses Abraham himself to preach justification by grace through faith (Rom 3:21-4:24)
 - C) The final argument would be: “you cannot say that the same fate can befall the circumcised as the uncircumcised, for then what value is there in the choice of God?”
- III. Paul’s argument
 - A) The Jew had completely misunderstood the true meaning of circumcision, in the same way that many Christians have misunderstood baptism
 - 1. This misunderstanding can be easily seen in the tradition of “infant baptism”
 - 2. Paul’s argument is that outward religion is of no value if there be not that inner regeneration (v.25)
 - i. And in the same manner, inward regeneration be sufficient even without the outward token of it (v.26-27)
 - ii. The outward token is only intended to be a seal to the person possessing it of the inward change God has wrought, and holiness is the fruit and proof of it (v.28-29)
 - a) Heb 12:14- Without holiness no man shall see the Lord
 - b) 1 Cor 6:9-11- Only those being washed inwardly are washed of God
 - c) 1 Sam 15:22- “To obey is better than the fat of rams”
- IV. History of circumcision
 - A) Gen 17:1-14- Abraham justified and in covenant with God without outward circumcision
 - 1. Rom 4:8-13- Circumcision only an outward “seal”
 - i. Seal- “that by which a thing is authenticated, token of proof”

- a) 1 Cor 9:2- The Corinthians were a “seal” of Paul’s apostleship and not the cause or source of it

B) Comparison of circumcision with baptism

1. The first people circumcised were adults, and then the token was performed upon their children in expectation of hope
 - i. The same is true of baptism
2. But not all those circumcised were the chosen people of God (Ishmael Gen 17:25)
 - i. Not all those baptized were the chosen people of God (Simon Acts 8:13)
3. The outward token of circumcision performed upon the children of Abraham essentially created an outward body of people, a visible race/nation
 - i. Just in the same way that the baptism of children produced an outward church
4. An adult who would submit to circumcision would be admitted to the privileges of the nation
 - i. Just as an adult who submits to baptism is admitted to the roles of the public church
5. This dichotomy runs throughout the scripture, beginning with Cain and Abel, and will continue right up until the second coming when the Lord will separate the wheat and the chaff, and divide the sheep from the goats

C) Rom 2:28-29- True inward versus false outward circumcision a token of the true versus the professing church

1. Rom 9:6- Not all Israel is “Israel”
 - i. John 1:47- “An Israelite in deed (works)”
2. Phil 3:2-3- The true circumcision/sealed children of God
 - i. 1 Cor 12:13- The true baptism/sealed child of God
3. Acts 7:51- Stephen calls the Jews “uncircumcised in heart” (Deut 10:16, 30:6)
4. Matt 12:41-42- The outward token will only convict to a greater degree if there be not the inner change (Isa ch 1, Hag ch 2)
 - i. Example of Hare, when he visited Rome and saw the pope appearing to kneel in prayer for the world, while it turned out the chair had legs made to look like his won

D) 1 Pet 3:21- Baptism a like figure

1. 1 Cor 10:1-3- So also the Red Sea
 - i. Both these examples are simply showing the way in which regeneration is symbolized in the events.
 - a) The Red Sea only outwardly shown the choice already made by God, same as the ark did
 - b) In like figure, humanity was washed of its pollution and regenerated at the flood, again the same figure of which baptism is only another token

