

## Romans Part 4 (2:17 - 2:29)

### --INTRO:

--just as most Gentiles suppress the truth of general revelation (Romans 1:18-21), most Jews suppress the truth of special revelation that God gave them through the Old Testament. In Romans 2:17-29 Paul focuses on the way most religious leaders of the Jews suppressed the truth in the first century.

--most Jewish religious leaders of Jesus' day believed they were saved simply because they were born Jews

--Romans 2:28-29 Paul confronts this idea: "For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter..."

--many Christians today (especially Catholics) have a similar attitude in that they believe they are saved because of they were born into a Christian family or were born in a "Christian" or "Catholic" country.

--while clinging to their heritage, the religious leaders of Jesus' day hypocritically taught one thing and then turned around and did another:

--Romans 2:21-24: "You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? 22 You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? 24 For 'the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you,' as it is written."

### --Jesus totally undermined the Jewish leaders' false security in their religious heritage and taught that we are saved by genuine faith that results in following His word:

--**John 8:31-59:** "Then Jesus said to those Jews who believed Him, 'If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.

*[not "if you are a Jew..."]*

32 And you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

*[when we have a living relationship with God that naturally results in following His word, the Holy Spirit gives us spiritual discernment to "know the truth..." (1 Corinthians 2:13-14 explains this spiritual discernment) What the unbelieving Jews said next indicates that they had neither a relationship with God nor spiritual discernment]*

33 They *[the Pharisees – 8:13]* answered Him, "**We are Abraham's descendants**, and have never been in bondage to anyone. How can You say, 'You will be made free'?"

*[Jesus was referring to freedom from sin, not the political freedom that they referred to; again, their confidence rests in the fact that they were born Jews – "we are Abraham's descendants..."]*

34 Jesus answered them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. 35 And a slave does not abide in the house forever, but a son abides forever. 36 Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed. 37 I know that you are Abraham's descendants, but you seek to kill Me, because My word has no place in you. 38 I speak what I have seen with My Father, and you do what you have seen with your father.' 39 They answered and said to Him, 'Abraham is our father.' Jesus said to them, 'If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. 40 But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. 41 You do the deeds of your father.' Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father — God."

*[as Jesus shined the light of truth into their lives, they continued to suppress the truth by speaking lies, attributing the reality of Christ's virgin birth to fornication]*

42 Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. 43 Why do you not understand My speech? Because you are not able to listen to My word. 44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.

*[far from being children of God because of their Jewish heritage, they are children of the devil, evidenced by their actions]*

He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it. 45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me. 46 Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me? 47 He who is of God hears God's words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of God.' 48 Then the Jews answered and said to Him, 'Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?'

*[as Jesus speaks more truth, the Pharisees continue to speaking lies]*

49 Jesus answered, 'I do not have a demon; but I honor My Father, and you dishonor Me. 50 And I do not seek My own glory; there is One who seeks and judges. 51 Most assuredly, I say to you, if anyone keeps My word he shall never see death.' 52 Then the Jews said to Him, 'Now we know that You have a demon! Abraham is dead, and the prophets; and You say, "If anyone keeps My word he shall never taste death." 53 Are You greater than our father Abraham, who is dead? And the prophets are dead. Who do You make Yourself out to be?' 54 Jesus answered, "... 56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad."

*[little did the Pharisees realize that they taught and lived totally different from Abraham whom they identified with]*

57 Then the Jews said to Him, 'You are not yet fifty years old, and have You seen Abraham?' 58 Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM.' 59 Then they took up stones to throw at Him;

*[the Jews ultimately suppressed the truth by trying to kill the truth.]*

but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by."

#### **--John the Baptist also undermined the false security of the religious leaders:**

**--Matthew 3:1-17:** "In those days John the Baptist came, preaching in the Desert of Judea and saying, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near.' ... 5 People went out to him from Jerusalem and all Judea and the whole region of the Jordan. 6 Confessing their sins, they were baptized by him in the Jordan River.

*[those baptized by John responded in faith to the limited revelation available to them, especially the general revelation in their heart; and on the basis of this they were saved. Perhaps all they really knew were the two details John proclaimed: "repent" because "heaven is near."]*

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? 8 **Produce fruit** in keeping with repentance. 9 And **do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.'**

*[that is, don't think you'll be saved simply because you're a Jew]*

I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham.

*[this statement relates to what Paul wrote in Romans 2:29: "he is a Jew who is one inwardly.." – see following section in notes for further explanation]*

10 The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire. 11 "I baptize you with water for repentance. But after me will come one who is more powerful than I, whose sandals I am not fit to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire. 12 His winnowing fork is in his hand, and he will clear his threshing floor, gathering his wheat into the barn and burning up the chaff with unquenchable fire." 13 Then Jesus came from Galilee to the Jordan to be baptized by John. 14 But John tried to deter him, saying, "I need to be baptized by you, and do you come to me?" 15 Jesus replied, "Let it be so now; it is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." Then John consented. 16 As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."

--Romans 2:28-29a: **"For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; 29 but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter..."**

--the privilege that the religious leaders thought they had because of their physical heritage of being Abraham's descendants was actually based on the **spiritual heritage of having faith like Abraham**, which they lacked and which anyone could claim through faith.

--in essence, those who have faith like Abraham are **Abraham's spiritual descendants** and therefore inherit salvation that God promised to Abraham (rather than inheritance belonging to those who are simply Abraham's physical descendants)

--Romans 4:16: "Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace, so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are **of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.**"

--Galatians 3:26-29: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 **And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.**"

--we'll explore this further when we get to Romans 4...

--those who are Abraham's spiritual descendants are distinguished not by physical circumcision, which the religious leaders focused on; but rather they are distinguished by **spiritual circumcision**, that is, a heart of obedience, which the religious leaders lacked.

--Colossians 2:11: "In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, **by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh**, by the circumcision of Christ..."

--Romans 2:29b: **"...whose praise is not from men but from God."**

--genuine faith and obedience often result in opposition from the world, but the world's approval doesn't matter; what matters is God's approval.

--the true substance of our life is invisible to the world. As Paul said, "For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3)

--**in many ways, what the world judges and praises is the aspect of our life that "died" and the real substance of our life they cannot see because it is "hidden with Christ in God."**

--Colossians 3:1-7: "If then you were raised with Christ, **seek those things which are above**, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. 3 **For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.** 5 Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. 6 Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience, 7 in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them."