Scripture Passage: Romans 2:17-29

The Point: Since no one can keep the law perfectly, everyone needs a Savior.

I. INTRODUCTION & BACKGROUND
   A. God’s holy law does not contain some rules that are optional and others that are rigid.
   B. God’s standard for His people is nothing less than perfect holiness, because He is perfect and holy.
   C. The fact that humans beings cannot and do not keep God’s law perfectly means one thing: everyone needs a Savior.
   D. The gospel Paul preached declares that God Himself provided the Savior we need.
   E. The church in Rome was made up of both Jews and Gentiles.
   F. Paul had previously explained the reason Gentiles needed to hear and believe the gospel and now he moves to those of Jewish background.

II. HYPOCRISY REVEALED (Romans 2:17-24)
   A. Paul used several questions to expose the hypocrisy of Jews who felt spiritually superior to Gentiles yet did not live up to the law’s demands.
   B. These are claims that Jews presumed to be true about themselves (vv.17-18).
      1. “Jew” = a term established 500-600 years before the writing, shortened from the restored area of Judah, the term was a point of pride.
      2. “the law” = was the centerpiece of the old covenant system.
      3. “boast in God” = being the one true God’s chosen people.
      4. “knowing His will” = others had no such position or revelation.
      5. “the things that are superior” = far greater than even the best Gentile code of conduct.
   C. Some Jewish believers continued to think of themselves as spiritually superior to Gentile Christians (vv.19-20).
   D. They taught others not to steal but were guilty of stealing (v.21).
   E. They taught others not to commit adultery but were guilty of adultery (v.22).
   F. Paul restates the point of his three examples (v.23).
   G. Paul paraphrases Ezekiel 36:21(v.24).

III. OBEDIENCE REQUIRED (Romans 2:25-27)
   A. If people do not obey the Lord, their ritual practices and symbols are meaningless (v.25).
   B. Paul’s point was that if circumcision truly served as a Jew’s commitment to love the Lord and obey His commands, then a Gentile’s faithful obedience to God’s commands demonstrated that same commitment to the Lord in his heart (v.26).
   C. The idea of a Gentile judging a Jew was shocking (v.27).
IV. HEART RECOGNIZED (Romans 2:28-29)
A. God understands our inner nature. The true follower of God is marked not merely by external physical symbols but by a heart dedicated to Him.
B. God’s definition of who is or is not part of His family does not depend on outward marks or rituals (v.28).
C. God’s definition of His family is determined by an inward change (v.29).
D. “by the Spirit, not the letter” = becoming a true child of God is a gracious work of the Holy Spirit, not the result of a person’s own religious efforts.

V. CONCLUSION & APPLICATION
A. A person’s inability to keep the law cancels any claims of self-righteousness.
B. The profit of the law is found only in full obedience to the law.
C. God looks at the heart of humans, acknowledging those with a heart dedicated to Him.
D. Teaching Ideas
   1. Create Interest
      a. Ask the group if anyone had perfect attendance while in school. What did it take for them to have perfect attendance? Ask everyone to discuss how hard it is to be perfect at anything.
   2. Closing Challenge
      a. Are there times when you focus on external rituals as symbols of your righteousness?
      b. Have you considered what God desires? Is your heart fully committed to Him?
E. Don’t Forget!!!
   1. Insufficient & Romans 2:17-29
   2. Since no one can keep the law perfectly, everyone needs a Savior.

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