

Inside Out

Tim Lockwood, who was studying for his doctorate in sociology at the time, offered a pithy definition of his discipline. He said, "I study the difference between what people say they believe and what they actually do." Ouch. That is the issue that the Apostle Paul is digging into as we continue our study of Romans 2. Does the way I live my life on the outside flow from an inward reality? Though Paul is speaking about Jews, we will find that much of what he says transfers straight across to any believer who aspires to follow Christ.

What matters is not what we appear to be on the outside, but who we truly are on the inside. If you reach for a can of Coke and find orange juice on the inside, is it really a Coke? May God enable us to live lives of wholeness and integrity, so that what we appear to be is a true reflection of who we really are.

Monday – Relying on Religion

1. Please read Romans 2.17-23. What strikes you about this passage?

Text Insight – At the time that Paul wrote Romans, many Jews, because of repeated themes in Scripture, saw themselves as the "light of the world." Many, including Paul before his conversion, would have celebrated the fact that God had chosen Israel and given them the law so as to be a beacon of virtue to the world. The coming of Jesus Christ had changed everything, turning the world upside down. Christ calls us back to a true religion – one that is a matter of the heart.

2. What did Paul seem to be doing when he confronted those who "rely on the law and brag about their relationship with God?" In what ways can we also fall into this trap and "rely on the law?"
3. What does Paul mean by the admonition, "you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself?"

A Matter of Prayer – Ask God to purify your faith in him so that you are depending less on religious trappings and more on Jesus Christ alone.

Tuesday – Ritual or Relationship

1. Please read Romans 2.25-27. What was circumcision for the Jews?
2. How does Paul relate circumcision to the law in this passage?
3. Consider today's Christians. Though we don't rely on circumcision, what religious rituals might we wrongly trust in?

A Matter of Prayer – Pray that in your inmost being that you would know the Lordship of Christ today, and consider a new way to make his reign ever more manifest in your life.

Wednesday – Inward Outward

1. Please read Romans 2.28-29. If you were to paraphrase these two verses, how would you write them?
2. If a person were only a Christian "outwardly," he or she would be practicing religion in a very diminished way. What are some examples of the outward practice of Christianity?
3. Imagine a person whose spiritual practices match the inward reality of his faith. Name some "inward" practices that accompany such a dynamic faith in Christ.

Putting it into Practice – In your most private self, welcome true intimacy with God today.

Thursday – Circumcision of the Heart

"Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. " Matt. 22:37

"Romance is the deepest thing in life, romance is deeper even than reality." G.K. Chesterton

1. Please reread Romans 2.29. How has the idea of circumcision changed since the coming of Christ?

Text Insight – *"[Paul's] point is that the badge of circumcision... can deceive. Sometimes what is going on inside the package doesn't match the badge... on the outside. When that happens the badge means the opposite of what it says."* Tom Wright – Paul for Everyone: Romans

2. What is the significance of Paul's injection of the "Spirit" in his discussion about religious practices. How is it contrasted to the "written code?"
3. Knowing that our faith in Christ is foremost a matter of the heart, how can you express your love for Christ today?

Friday – The Lord is Your Life

1. Please read Deuteronomy 30:19-20. What is involved in this invitation to receive life?
2. What does it mean to love God, according to this passage?
3. Take some time to reflect on what it means that "the Lord is your life." Write down some of your insights and take some time to pray through them.