

The Shameful Contradiction

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[0:00] rightful, just condemnation of the unbelievers.

First the heathen, then the hypocrite, and now the Hebrew. And so we have God's specific condemnation of the Jews, that is, unbelieving Jews.

And so let me just go ahead and read, starting again with verse 17. Indeed, you are called a Jew. That's how we know we have shifted now from Gentiles to Jews.

That's obvious. You are called a Jew. And rest on the law. Make your boast in God. Know his will. And approve the things that are excellent. Being instructed out of the law and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.

[1:26] You therefore who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? You who say, do not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?

You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who make your boast in the law. Do you dishonor God through breaking the law?

For the name of God is blasphemy. You are blasphemy among the Gentiles because of you. As it is written, For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law.

But if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?

And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?

[2:31] For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, not in the letter, whose praise is not from men, but from God.

All right, so, the condemnation of the Hebrew. And just by way of quick review, last week we looked at the prideful confidence of the religious man, the prideful confidence of the religious man.

And pointed out in verses 17, in a few verses there, we pointed out that the Jew, the unbelieving Jew, was boasting, had a prideful confidence, first of all, in their lineage, second, in their law, because they'd been given the law, in the Lord, the Lord Yahweh, the one true God.

They boasted in their learning, and they also boasted in their leadership. They took these things that God had richly endowed them with, which carried with it a great deal of responsibility, to be ministers to the world.

And they took those things. And not only did they think their salvation was secured just because they possessed these things.

[4:08] Or had this advantage over the Gentiles. But they also took these things and lived a life that was in utter contradiction to these things.

And that leads us to the second point. Not only the prideful confidence of the religious man, but the shameful contradiction. The shameful contradiction of the religious man.

And now I want to remind you that even though his focus here is a specific group of people, the Hebrews, the Jews, the application can be made and should be made to all religious people.

I'm not talking about true born-again Christians. I'm talking about professors of religion or professors of the one true God. We're also not talking about religious in the general sense, just incorporating all types and flavors of religion.

We're talking about orthodox religion. Those who hold to and have, to some degree, embraced an orthodox religion, but there is no reality of faith in their hearts and lives.

[5:25] They're religious people. All right? And so that's why it makes perfect sense then for Paul to highlight or reveal the shameful contradiction that exists with religious people.

Now, see, God is stacking these things up as the basis for his condemnation of the unbelieving religious person because of their prideful confidence and because of their shameful contradiction. And verse 21 is the first part of that verse is what sets the tone here. Look at it. Verse 21, you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself?

That sets the tone for what Paul is going to say about this contradiction that exists with these people, with religious people.

You teach others. Do you not teach yourself? And then he's going to go from there and be specific about some things. Some things that they are teaching, some things that they are proclaiming, some things that they are being very dogmatic about, and yet they're not living these things.

[6:39] A shameful contradiction. Now, again, let me remind you, we're talking here specifically about God's chosen people. He's talking about Israel. God's chosen people.

These are people who were blessed above all nations. They really were. Blessed above all nations. They enjoyed literally most favored nation status with God.

They were his chosen people. Still are, by the way. And they possessed, along with that, that most favored status with God.

They possessed the full revelation of God's redemptive plan. It had been given directly to them. Not to any other nation. Not to any other group of people.

Now, they were to take that revelation to the peoples of all the world. But the fact remains that they were most favored in that God had revealed his plan directly to them.

[7:35] They were the possessors of the very words of God. God's people, Israel. They had in their possession the written laws of God.

Think about that. All those things given directly to them. And yet, at the same time, there was this huge contradiction. A disconnect.

If you will. I mean a major disconnect. A disconnect between orthodoxy. That is right doctrine. They had that.

We're not talking about some aberration. Not talking about some cult. Not talking about, you know, like the Mormons or the Jehovah's Witnesses. Or the Muslims or whatever other religion.

We're not talking about that. We're talking about the right religion. They had orthodoxy. Right doctrine. But there was a disconnect between their orthodoxy and their orthopraxy.

[8:36] That means right practice. The two didn't come together. Or to put it maybe in a more colloquial way. A way that we're familiar with. They did not walk the talk.

They did walk the talk. Now, let's make the application to maybe some of us. Well, really, to some measure, all of us are guilty of this.

Even though this is not what Paul's focus is. But let's make the application to Christians today. Not Jews, but Christians.

Or let's first make it to professing Christians. Not necessarily possessors. There are a lot of those here in our culture, in our world today, who are professing Christians.

Christians. And they're just as guilty as the Jews. And the same condemnation that God exacts upon the unbelieving Jew, he has every right to exact upon professing Christians, but those who possess no reality of faith.

[9:52] Who are very religious. There are many like that. Those who are kind of like the quintessential politician. You know what a politician is.

The one who says what he says and then does what he does. That's sadly what many politicians are today. But sadly, even more sadly, that's what many professing Christians are like today.

Who say what they say and then do what they do. And then I would take that application a little further. Take a little liberty in that every one of us can be guilty as well.

Now, our condemnation is not going to be the same. God will chastise us as children. But we too are guilty of talking way beyond our walk.

Or there being a disconnect between our orthodoxy and our orthopraxy. And it's a thing that requires repentance. But now, it is important though, in relation to the text, being true to the intent of the text here.

[11:09] It's important to note that the problem here is, we might call it hypocrisy. Kind of a hypocrisy.

See, we're not talking necessarily about just merely falling short of pure obedience to God's word. Every one of us are guilty of that. We're not just talking about, you know, not achieving perfection in this life.

We're not going to achieve perfection. We're not just talking about failing. Or just sinning. We're not, we're all going to do those kind of things. We're all going to sin. We're not talking about that.

Paul's talking about a willful disobedience by those who have no regard for the righteousness of God because there is no righteousness in them. No true righteousness.

And so their lives represent a shameful contradiction. But they feel no shame. This is the person in view here. Whether a Hebrew or whether a, quote, professing Christian who is not a real possessor. [12:16] And that's the kind of person we have here. In fact, let me have you look at Psalm 50 and verse 16. And the condemnation here, the rebuke is similar but much more severe.

Look at Psalm 50 and verse 16. God has a word to say to the wicked. That's how it's translated in my copy of scripture.

The unbelievers. It's unbelievers. The wicked. The unrighteous. But to the wicked God says. What right have you to declare my statutes? You see that?

What right do you have to do that? To the wicked. What right do you have to declare my statutes? Or take my covenant in your mouth? That is to profess it to be yours when it's not really yours. You're not of the covenant. You're not saved. What right do you have to be a teacher? What right do you have to take the covenant in your mouth? And seeing you hate instruction and cast my words behind you.

[13:18] When you saw a thief, you consented with him and have been a partaker with adulterers. You give your mouth to evil and your tongue frames deceit. You sit and speak against your brother.

You slander your own mother's son and so forth. See, here's the same condemnation. And the wicked is just simply those who are unbelievers. And the implication here is that the psalmist has in view the same group of people that Paul has in view here in Romans chapter 2.

And that is those who are very religious. Who want to be teachers. And they are teaching, quote, God's word.

God's statutes. They're even speaking as possessors of or partakers of his covenant. And yet it's not true.

And God's rebuke there in Psalm is much more severe. What right do you have to do that? And so here's the idea. These are unbelievers, though religious, and they are hypocrites.

[14:29] They almost glory in telling other people the truth and then living just the way they want to live. All right? Now, what sins revealed this shameful contradiction?

And that's what Paul's going to tell us next. And I have identified or categorized this into four that I think we can see right here in the text.

There are four. Number one, societal sins. That is, sins against society. Look at verse 21. The first part of it.

Or the second part, excuse me. You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal? All right? Very simply.

It's going out there and standing very resolutely and almost condemning toward those who would break the eighth commandment.

[15:29] Thou shalt not steal. And then stealing yourself. When I mention the name Jim Baker, what do you think of?

I'm not just trying to highlight him. He's one of the most notable. And still, even today, people remember. We remember, don't we? Jim Baker.

Well, he's made his way back now. You know, he's ministering and I'm not spoofing him, anything like that. But that's what we think of. And here's a man, a man of God, a man, a preacher of the word.

And I'm sure on many occasions preached. Thou shalt not steal. And then he stole. And yet there are many ways to steal, aren't there?

Aren't there? Many very subtle ways to rob a person, whether it's an employer, whether it's a family member.

[16:36] In fact, someone pointed out that we can even rob from ourselves. When we do not use the talents and skills and gifts that God has given us.

We rob ourselves. So there are many ways to steal. So here is the shameful contradiction. Here's this religious person who's coming out in the forefront saying, thou shalt not steal.

And then, on the other hand, is stealing. The second sin would be sexual sins. Moral sins.

And the focus here is the seventh commandment. Look at verse 22. You who say, do not commit adultery.

Do you commit adultery? And we're talking here, I think we can generalize this into adultery in all of its facets or possibilities.

[17:41] That a person can commit adultery. It's the seventh commandment. Thou shalt not commit adultery. What comes to mind when I mention the name Jimmy Swagger?

You know, it's interesting, just as a side note, that both these men are now ministering.

And I'm not calling them unbelievers. I'm saying these were very religious men who preached against and then sinned the same sins. But it's interesting that both these men have made their way back to ministry.

I mean, you can still see Jimmy Swagger. In fact, it wasn't very long after he committed and confessed his sin that he was right back into the ministry. But it took Jim Baker a lot longer, didn't it? It seems like the church is willing to forgive a man for sexual sin. But you take my money, buddy. That's just it. You're not coming. You're not going to get my forgiveness.

[18:43] Isn't that amazing? What comes to mind when I mention the name? And this is a sad one to me. Ray Bolts. Ray Bolts.

I think over the years. Over the years and the times that I have, you know, have heard news of, quote, Christian leaders or high profile Christians.

Coming out of the closet, so to speak, and admitting their sin. I think this one floored me more than any other. Maybe you don't know. Some of you are looking at me like, huh?

You know who Ray Bolts is? Singer. Christian singer. Well, songwriter. Wrote many tremendous songs.

And I guess it was about a year and a half. Has it been a couple of years now? In an interview with Christianity Today, admitted that all those years he'd been a practicing homosexual.

[19:57] All the years that he was singing, watch the lamb. That's one of them. More to some of the others. Anybody know? Thank you. Thank you.

What? Thank you for giving to the Lord. I mean, this is a tremendous song. And for him to say. Not. That I have just recently. Succumbed to this kind of sinful lifestyle, but all those years. And this is not gossip.

This. This is what he said. And that he rejoiced. He said, in a sense. I'm not quoting him, but he was rejoicing that now he's out of the closet and he does not have to feel guilty anymore.

Not that he has repented. Now I think he's affiliated himself with a church out east somewhere that embraces homosexuality.

[21:06] Third. Sacrilegious sins. Verse 22. This one's a little more difficult to understand. You who abhor idols.

We might say abhor idolatry. Do you rob temples? This is rather complicated.

And I don't know that there's a definitive answer as to exactly what Paul means here. The others are pretty clear. I mean, they just, you know, you preach against, you know, breaking this law and you break it.

You preach against breaking this law and you break it. And then he gets to this one and the two don't seem to go together. Or they don't seem to come together in the same logical way.

You abhor idols or you abhor idolatry. That we understand. Do you rob temples? Let's have a possibility. I might just throw these out to you.

[22:08] In Acts chapter 19, verse 37, we won't turn to it. 37, 38. Paul in Ephesus. And they're about to be, you know, just destroyed in this riot.

They're in Ephesus and all kinds of accusations are flying. And, you know, one of the city officials steps in. And really, in a sense, rescues God's people here.

And he says, you know, what accusation do you have against them? These are not robbers of temples. Ephesus. And, of course, Ephesus was the place where they had the temple to Diana. The goddess Diana. And so, it could be that the idea here is that apparently Christians in this day, in the first century of the church, might have been guilty of going into pagan temples and robbing these heathen temples, robbing artifacts and maybe idols and religious objects and such.

Maybe justifying it. You know, these are pagans and we need to destroy what they're doing. And so, it's possible that that was happening. And I don't know if that's what Paul's talking about here.

[23 : 38] It could just simply be, some have suggested, based upon the prohibition in Deuteronomy 7.25, that it was just merely the possession, just the possession of pagan art objects that may have been plundered in years past by Gentile armies.

And, you know, maybe, you know, they went down, you know, here's a Jew going down to the local antique shop. And he sees this pretty little thing over here that might be a nice decoration in the home.

And, you know, and so to buy that, so what if it's a heathen idol? It looks neat. And so, I put that on my mantle in my den. And it could be he's talking about that.

And I think there is some validity and something for Christians to seriously consider about bringing into their home idols, pagan idols, you know, Buddhas or whatever they may be, to place them in a prominent place in their home just because it's kind of a neat little artifact.

Or maybe you took a trip to China and you brought back a little idol there. And I do carry around with me in a box some things that I got in China, some incense that they burn to whatever their gods are, and some other little artifacts.

[24 : 59] But I don't display them in my home. Use them to show people about the religion in China. And I think there might be something for a Christian to consider there. And I don't know what he means.

It could be that he's just simply talking about robbing God. Like the Bible says, like Jesus said, you rob God of tithes and offerings. And so, in that sense, robbing temples.

You pour idolatry, but you rob God. I'm not sure how the two go together. It could be just a reference to the money changers that Jesus disrupted and condemned there in the temple who were being dishonest and robbing from people and, in a sense, were robbing God or robbing temple or plundering the temple.

I don't know. Really, it doesn't matter because the idea here is, clearly, since the other two are clear references to specific commandments, that here we have a reference to maybe both the first and second commandment that deal with having no gods before me and making no graven images, those first two commandments.

You know, the first one really focusing on the object of worship. What is your object of worship? And if your object of worship, true worship in life, is anything other than God or anything before God, then you are breaking this commandment.

[26 : 27] And you abhor idolatry, and yet you break this commandment. And you've placed all these things before God. And so there's that commandment.

Then the no graven images, that's idolatry. Not speaking so much of the object of worship, but the manner of our worship, how we worship, kind of the trappings and, you know, the makeup of our worship.

In this sense, the making of graven images that we might bow down to or might place in a prominent position and might look to.

And, you know, whether it's, you know, some big picture of Jesus or some icon of a saint or something, whatever it may be. And this is prohibited, clearly, in the commandments.

It could be this is the idea. And so, you know, here is this religious person that was just abhorrent that anyone would worship an idol, and then you have idols.

[27 : 29] Maybe not the idols made out of stone, wood. Maybe not objects that we would call traditional idols, but other things in life that we have placed before God, that our allegiance is toward instead of God, or that our love and our desires are directed toward rather than God.

And it's idolatry. And again, you know, you can blur the line here from unbelievers to believers. Even believers can and do commit this sin. And we can be just as hypocritical as the Jews.

There's a fourth sin. He kind of closes it with this, and I've called it slanderous sins. Slanderous because of what this kind of sinning, really it's all of these combined, what it causes other unbelievers to do, to slander, to blaspheme in the very name of God.

Look at verse 23. You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.

And just think about that. That this shameful contradiction in life, this disconnect between the truth and the way it is lived out, the way the truth is left out, really, of life and what others observe, and

that it would actually cause pagans and unbelievers to blaspheme the Lord.

[29:23] And so it's shameful, a shameful contradiction of the religious man. Then when we get to this last one here, Paul reveals, thirdly, the rightful condemnation of the religious man.

He starts in verse 25 with this word, circumcision. He says, For circumcision is indeed profitable. That is, it's a good thing. It's a worthwhile thing if you keep the law. But if you're a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

What's he talking about here? Well, you know, the subject of circumcision is not, it's a really easy thing to talk about in mixed company. And so I'm not going to talk about it.

You know what it is, okay? That is, you know what it is in the physical sense. But do you know what it is in the spiritual sense?

[30:26] What it represents? Well, the circumcision was a symbol of God's covenant. It is what identified, it was a physical outward identification of those who were in his covenant, in covenant with God.

And further, I would say that it was a symbol, a graphic symbol, of the removal of sin.

Of sin. A removal of the sin that has been passed down from father to father to father to father, from Adam on. So it symbolized the removal of that because circumcision involves a removal, does it not?

From the father. And so it was a very, very important thing for the Jew, wasn't it? That's what identified them as, as Jews.

They were of the circumcision. But see, the religious Jew had placed his confidence, his confidence of salvation in his circumcision.

[31:39] In fact, really, this is the second of two things that the Jew was placing his confidence in for salvation. The law and now the circumcision.

Now, Paul has just thrown out all confidence in the law. He's already dealt with that. God's going to judge according to truth. And now, here's the objection of circumcision.

He's about to throw that out too. I'm talking about the physical circumcision. And he says, it's a good thing, it's a great thing if you keep the law. That is, that is literally saying that if this outward symbol of covenant relationship with God, if the outward symbol of it is corroborated by or matches the inward reality.

That is, if you are a true believer, then it's fine, it's great. But if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

That means it's worthless. You can be circumcised and it won't profit you not one thing. Because it's not the circumcision that profits.

[32:52] It's not the physical circumcision. But what it represents is what it, what is worth anything. And that is, as he's going to say a little bit later, the circumcision of the heart.

the cutting away of the sin. He goes on, therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his circumcision, or rather his uncircumcision, be counted as circumcision?

You see where he, where he's going with this. That the physical circumcision is not it. And if, if you, you, you religious Jew, if you're counting on your salvation based upon your physical circumcision, that is that all the circumcision are just automatically saved.

If you're counting on that, too bad. Because it's not the outward circumcision that matters. And so he's giving all these scenarios.

Those who keep the law and they may be uncircumcised, but to them, they're of the circumcision. In that spiritual sense. And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you, who even with your written code and circumcision are transgressors of the law.

[34:12] That is, their very existence, their very life stands as a condemnation of you. Because they're not of the circumcision, but they are circumcised in their heart.

That is, they have the inward reality. For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

And so he just comes right out and says it plainly. And so in this sense, we can even say, and I think we can say this in a spiritual sense, if you're born again believer, you are of the circumcision, circumcised heart.

And so in that sense, we're spiritual Jews. And we're not, not national Jews. That's not our nationality. But in this sense, we're Jews.

He is not a Jew. He is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly. And circumcision is that of the heart.

[35:18] In the spirit. Not in the letter whose praise is not from men, but from God. So here's what it all comes down to. You cannot boast in the law as a guarantee of your salvation.

Oh, Jew, religious man. So we throw that out. You cannot place your assurance of salvation on the fact that you have been physically circumcised.

And so you're a Jew that you automatically saved. You can't, can't do that because circumcision is of the heart. That is, what counts is regeneration.

Of the heart in the spirit. and so his condemnation, that's why I say his rightful condemnation of this group of people, this kind of innumerable body of people, including religious Jews, unbelieving Jews, as well as all religious, in the orthodox sense, religious people everywhere.

where your condemnation is just because you have not been born again. He didn't use the word born again here.

[36:36] But he says that it happens in the heart and it's in the spirit. And you don't boast in man, you boast in God. It is his work. And so his condemnation is sure.

And so the unbelieving Jew is rightfully condemned because he has the law but he doesn't live it. And the unbelieving Jew is rightfully condemned because he bears the symbol of the covenant but possesses no inward reality of it.

Now, let me close by turning this whole thing into a positive statement about who we ought to be.

We can do that. We just turn it into a positive. And we can look here in verse 17 and we can say this is who we ought to be.

Those who rest on the law. Those who make their boast in God. And if it's interesting that the very things that should be a positive should be what identifies us is what these Jews, these religious people were banking on for their salvation.

[37:57] Which really amounted to nothing but good works. But again, in the positive, here's who we ought to be. We ought to boast in the Lord. We ought to know His will.

And we can know His will. We approve the things that are excellent. Verse 18. Being instructed out of the law. That's who we are.

Isn't it great? Instructed in the law. And to be, and this is something that ought to be expressed in our lives. And we have, with all these great blessings, we have a great responsibility.

And what are those responsibilities? Verse 19. Very same responsibilities given to the Jew originally and now is transferred to the church. And that is that we're to be a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, teacher of babes, have the form of knowledge and truth in the law.

And so in the positive sense, this is what ought to be true of us. And is true, really, of all true born-again Christians.

[39:04] These things don't save us, but these are the things we've been saved into. Praise His name. And we can go further and even turn some of these others into positives, in a sense.

And so instead of, we ought to teach the law, we ought to teach the Word, but also teach ourselves. If we turn that into a positive.

Yeah, we ought to preach against stealing. And at the same time, our lives ought to exhibit an agreement with that and not steal ourselves.

We ought to preach against and teach and say, stand against adultery and all moral sins. And our lives ought to match that.

You see. We can turn this all into a positive and certainly a poor idolatry. Never robbed from God. And the testimony of our lives is not based upon any outward expression, expression, per se.

[40:22] For the Jews, circumcision may be for the Christian, it might be mistakenly identified with baptism. Or church membership. A certain kind of church.

Or a certain kind of conservative lifestyle. Or some political affiliation. It's becoming like that in our day. But rather, it ought to, the testimony of our lives ought to be based upon the inward reality.

The circumcised heart. Our born again. The reality of our born again experience. Our faith in Him.

So we can turn all those into positives. And that's what ought to identify us. Not as the guarantee of our salvation, per se. But as the testimony of our lives.

And how diabolical of the devil to move in men hearts to turn all of these great blessings into the basis of condemnation.

[41:30] Transcription by CastingWords