



Sermon Growth Guide

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Tune My Heart | Romans 2:25-3:4

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Key Verse: "No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart." (Romans 2:29)

Big Idea: In the Old Testament the heart signifies the center of a person that orients all else. We live not from outward appearances but from who we truly are in our relationship to God.

Foundations

Paul mentions two Old Testament foundational aspects in this passage: circumcision and heart. Circumcision originally was an outward sign of an inward commitment of faith in the covenant, binding agreement with Yahweh:

"You shall circumcise the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you." (Gen 17:11)

Thus, circumcision is a sign pointing to something inner and foundational, the essence of that the Old Testament means by heart. We tend to think of heart as emotions, given our cultural usage. When the Old Testament refers to emotions it uses the words kidneys or belly, locating feeling in the part of the body where we feel emotion. In contrast, heart refers to the center of who we are.

"Still Pharaoh's heart was hardened, and he would not listen to them." (Exod 7:13)

Thus, when Paul mentions circumcision and heart in this passage, he is pointing to the sign of our inner and full commitment to Jesus Christ.

Understanding God's Word

When we read circumcision and heart, we should hear an outward sign of an inward and full commitment. Thus, Paul deepens the definition of Jew to its root as a person who is from the inside out committed to God, to continue the metaphor, from the root through the trunk of the tree to its fruit and leaves.

Applying God's Word

We can trace outward signs toward our inner commitment. What do we actually do in our daily lives, and how does this tell us about our heart commitment? If our outward behavior does not line up with what we think our inner commitment is, we need a heart tune-up. To do this we need honesty, maybe a few trusted friends, to challenge us to change our heart. When we change, or better, when the Holy Spirit changes us, our outward behavior will follow.

Witnessing God's Word

Jesus said that where a person's treasure is, there will their heart be also. Treasure does not only refer to money but to all our time commitments. Where do we spend our time and money? This points to our heart, the inner root of our outward behavior. If our outward signs are off, we need an inner re-tuning of the heart.