

# BIBLE & BAGEL

## Romans – Our Common Faith

23 December 2015

In Romans 2:29 the Apostle Paul said that circumcision of the heart is what counts before God. Most Christians think that the Apostle was nullifying the act of circumcision and he was bringing a new teaching. Circumcision of the heart is actually an Old Testament concept which Paul was reiterating especially to the Jews in Rome to tell them that keeping the Torah by their own efforts was insufficient. Read these scriptures: Deuteronomy 10:16, Deuteronomy 30:6 and Jeremiah 4:4, God has always called his people to circumcise their hearts.

### *Romans 3:21-26*

*But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, 22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all\* who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, 25 whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, 26 to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. NKJV*

After giving the people the bad news that we are all sinners; Paul now begins to tell them the good news that there is a way to be saved or to be made right with God. This way is the way of faith and not by keeping the Torah or by doing good works. He also says that this is not a new thing but it was testified to by the Torah and the prophets. One clear example we have in the Torah is that of Abraham who believed God and was counted as righteous, it was not just his actions but his trust in God, a trust that was strong enough that he was willing to sacrifice Isaac, his beloved son trusting that God would keep His word and give him an heir even if He had to raise Isaac from the dead<sup>i</sup>. Isaiah said that righteousness is found in the Lord not in the Law of the Lord and God clothes us in garments of salvation<sup>ii</sup> implying that salvation is given by God not earned by man.

So the Apostle goes on to say everyone both Jew and Gentile are equally guilty of sin but God is the one who justifies everyone who will put their faith in Jesus.

Some believe that this nullifies the Torah, since we can't find salvation by the Torah this is a misunderstanding, what Paul is saying here especially to the Jews is that keeping Torah and Jewish traditions without trusting God is meaningless, faith must come first and later the works. One could say relationship first and then service. The Torah was meant to instruct people who had already trusted God in how they should live not a means to find salvation. So if you have trusted the Lord for salvation then we need to live as His people and we do not how to do that in ourselves, thus we need the Bible, not just the New Testament but the whole counsel of God.

### *Romans 3:27-31*

*27 Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. 28 Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. 29 Or is He the God of the Jews only? Is He not also the God of the Gentiles? Yes, of the Gentiles*



*also, 30 since there is one God who will justify the circumcised by faith and the uncircumcised through faith. 31 Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law. NKJV*

The Apostle now addresses the religious Jews who boasted in keeping the Torah and at the same time explains that God justifies both Jew and Gentile because He is the God of both and if justification was to be found in the Torah, then Gentiles would have to become Jewish to be saved, but He is God of both and both are saved by faith. Faith does not make the Torah void or useless it affirms the Torah that teaches that we are all sinners and are saved by faith.

Paul is basing his argument on the “Shema” the most important prayer for the Jewish people which is taken from Deuteronomy 6:4 “hear O Israel the Lord your God is one”, one meaning the only God of both Jew and Gentile.

Many religions teach “salvation by works”, whether Buddhism, Hinduism or even Islam, man’s works are what make him right before God. Our faith; both for Jew and Gentile is not earned by works but comes as a gift from God by our faith in the completed work of Jesus.

We need however a right understanding of the word “believe”, it is not something abstract that is in our mind but rather what we believe in our mind must be shown by our actions. Later in chapter 10 we will see that we must both believe in our hearts and confess with our mouths, faith must be proven just as Abraham proved his faith by his actions as was counted righteous, so must we display our faith so that the world may see it.

---

<sup>i</sup> Genesis 15:6, Hebrews: 11:17-19

<sup>ii</sup> Isaiah 45:24-25, 61:10

