

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

IT IS A MATTER OF THE HEART

Romans 2:25, 28-29 "A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God."

Circumcision was required. If you were a Jewish male on the eighth day of your life you were circumcised. If you were a Gentile and became a believer in Yahweh, you were circumcised. Circumcision was a sign of the Covenant of Abraham in Genesis 17 and meant that Yahweh was their God and they were His people.

Circumcision became controversial in the early Christian church. A group of Jewish Christians were teaching, "Unless you are circumcised, according to the custom taught by Moses, you cannot be saved." (Acts 15:1) Luke writes, "This brought Paul and Barnabas into sharp dispute and debate with them. So, Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question." (Acts 15:2) Peter addressed the controversy with these words, "God, who knows the heart, showed that He accepted them by giving the Holy Spirit to them, just as He did to us. He did not discriminate between us and them, for He purified their hearts by faith." (Acts 15:8-9)

Being a Christian is a matter of the heart not outward rites and rituals. Solomon wrote, "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." (Proverbs 4:23) St. Paul wrote in Romans 10:10-13 "For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved." As Scripture says, "Anyone who believes in Him (Jesus) will never be put to shame. For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on Him, for, "Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved."

Prayer: Holy Spirit fill my heart with faith to believe and trust in Jesus for my forgiveness, eternal life, and salvation. Amen.

How sweet the name of Jesus sounds
In a believer's ear
It soothes our sorrows
Heals our wounds,
And drives away our fear.
It makes the wounded spirit whole
And calms the heart's unrest;

'Tis manna to the hungry soul And to the weary rest.

Dear name! The rock on which I build, My shield and hiding place;
My never-failing treasury filled With boundless stores of grace.

O Jesus, shepherd, guardian, friend, My Prophet, Priest and King,
My Lord, my life, my way, my end, Accept the praise I bring.

How weak the effort of my heart, How cold my warmest thought!
But when I see Thee as Thou art, I'll praise Thee as I ought.

Till then I would Thy love proclaim With ev'ry fleeting breath;
And may the Music of Thy name Refresh my soul in death.
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