

From the August 4, 2009 Issue

The Great Physician and How He Heals

A Christ-centered Trinitarian paraphrase of Romans 2.17 – 3.31

(17) Do you think that being Jewish makes you one of Papa's favorites? (18) You think yourself wise because you have the Bible memorized? (19) You think yourself a guide to the blind, a light in the darkness, (20) a rebuke to the foolish, a teacher of children? You think that knowing the Bible is the same thing as knowing the Truth? (21) If you're a teacher, why not start by teaching yourself? Are you a thief preaching against stealing? (22) Are you defending everyone's marriage but your own? Are you sharing in your culture's idolatrous preoccupations with consumption, pornography, and violence? (23) Are you doing evil while bragging about how well you know right from wrong? (24) Unbelievers see your hypocrisy and dismiss the Triune name.

(25) For us Jews, circumcision is our mark of belonging. Having this mark is fine, but what really counts is how you live. If you do evil, your circumcision becomes instead a mark of your opposition to Papa. (26) If you see the Triune goodness expressed in the lives of non-Jews, does this not indicate that they belong to Papa? Is this not the true circumcision? (27) When the uncircumcised do good, it speaks an ugly truth about the circumcised who do evil. (28) Belonging to Papa is not about external surgeries done to our bodies. (29) Belonging to Papa is about something that happens inside us and then comes out. As you go through this process, the world will not give you much applause, but Papa will.

(3.1) So is it worth anything to be a Jew? Is there any value in circumcision? (2) YES! LOTS! For it is through the Jews that Papa's Word has come into the world! (3) Yes, there were some unfaithful Jews, but there is no amount of unfaithfulness that could detract in any way from Papa's faithfulness. (4) Not one iota!!! If every person in the world told lies every minute of every day forever, it couldn't change the fact that Papa is True. It is written: "Your word will prove you true; The final word will be your Word." (5) Really! Our wrongness serves as a witness to Papa's rightness. A couple questions have arisen about possible implications of this:

Does it mean Papa is wrong to discipline us? (6) Don't be silly! Papa disciplines ALL of his beloved sons, Jews and non-Jews together. Because we are not exempt from his love, we are not exempt from his saving discipline.

(7) Does it mean it's a good thing to do wrong? (8) Some who distort our teaching accuse us of saying that: "Let's be bad so Papa can display his goodness." And of course, that's just plain dumb.

(9) So are Jews BETTER than non-Jews? No. As we've already said, both Jews and Greeks are crushed under the same darkness and dysfunction. (10) The Bible says:

How many people live in right relationship with each other? Zero. (11) How many understand reality? How many are interested in getting to know Papa? Zero. (12) They have turned away from Papa, away from each other; they are utterly incapable of the love and kindness they were created for. (13) Their throats exhale death; their tongues shape lies. Their lips are poison. (14) Their mouths are stuffed with hate. (15) Their feet rush into violence, (16) leaving misery in their wake. (17) They are clueless when it comes to living in harmony. (18) They

do not take Papa seriously.

(19) Jews live under Torah, and it is to them that Torah speaks. But Torah speaks to these few in order to speak the truth about the whole world. (20) Think about it: How many people achieve a face-to-face relationship with Papa by obeying Torah? Zero! That's not what Torah is for anyway. Torah is a diagnostic tool; it reveals sickness, but it does not cause health.

(21) But the good news is that, apart from Torah's diagnosis of illness, health has finally come to us! This is what the Bible is all about, (22) the Triune health/rightness/harmony finding its home in humanity, expressing itself in the shared life of all who believe the truth of Master Jesus. In this context, the Jew-Gentile distinction doesn't matter, (23) because ALL have been diagnosed with the same disease, (24) and ALL are now freely given the cure -- the Triune rightness/justice/goodness incarnate in human life. This cure lives IN the risen body of the One to whom all people are bound -- Master Jesus. (25) By sharing in our death, he gave us to share in his union with Papa, a union experienced by those who believe. Papa sent Jesus to reveal to us his forgiveness (26) and the rightness/beauty of the Triune Life, the life experienced by those who believe the gospel of Jesus.

(27) How could ethnic self-importance have any place within this reality?!? It doesn't. Because this is not about how good we are at achieving religious tasks; it's about knowing what has already been achieved on our behalf. (28) We enter into the Triune rightness/wholeness not by rule-following but by truth-believing.

(29) Or do you think Papa is just another tribal deity? Do you think of him as an idol that belongs to the Jews? No! There is no 'god of the Jews' or 'god of the non-Jews'. There is ONE God for ALL, and all belong to HIM: (30) Hear oh Israel, the Lord is One! The one Triune Life is given freely to the circumcised and the uncircumcised, and all receive it by believing that it is true.

(31) Does this dethrone Torah? Absolutely not! Because Torah was never on the throne to begin with! Torah serves the throne, just as we do. Torah is a diagnostic tool in the hand of the Great Physician. Torah has done exactly what Papa created it do.

~ John Stoncypher