

The Disadvantage of Advantage

Romans 2:17 - 24

17Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; 18if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; 19if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, 20an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— 21you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? 22You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? 24As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

Christians today often possess many advantages but fail to use them. For example, the Bible, the right to worship, encounter with God, the chance to serve the Lord are often left unclaimed and unemployed. The failure to seize and use the advantages we have available was the theme confronted by Paul in today's Bible lesson.

Paul focused on the Jews of his day who had many things available to them as God's people, yet they often forfeited what God had given. David Jeremiah identified six privileges the Jews had:

- 1. *A Hebrew Birth.* They came from the line of Abraham and were God's chosen people among all the earth.**
- 2. *A Holy Book.* They possessed the law of God or the Word of God. They had the entire Old Testament available to them.**
- 3. *An Honorable Pride.* God had chosen them as His special vessels of revelation and service.**
- 4. *A Heavenly Wisdom.* They knew what pleased and honored God. They had the luxury of knowing God's expectations and perspectives.**
- 5. *A History of Discernment.* They knew God's will and God's decision on what was right/wrong, good/bad, accepted/rejected. They knew not only the wisdom of God but how to employ it practically.**
- 6. *A Heritage of Instruction.* The Jews had a long history of teachers, prophets and proclaimers who could educate them in God's ways.**

Paul argued that most of these privileges or advantages had been lost or squandered. In verses 19-20, Paul said the Jews were blindly congratulating themselves with a false sense of confidence. Contrary to what they mistakenly thought, the Jews were actually blind, dwelling in darkness, floundering in foolishness, spiritually immature and stuck in deception. They had the forms

or outlines of God's truth that should have taken them to Christ but they refused. Just as a map leads you to a destination but is not the destination itself, the Jews had all that was necessary to bring them to the fullness of Christ but they misread and wasted those privileges.

To some extent, all Christians are teachers. Some teach Bible studies at church, some teach children at home and some teach in larger group settings. We all have the duty to teach and train ourselves. Paul reminds readers that teachers have some special duties:

1. Reverence toward God and His ways.
2. Good relationships with others - those you teach and who teach you.
3. Reliance upon God's Word.
4. Realistic expression and living out what you learn and teach.
5. Humbly guard against spiritual pride or arrogance.
6. Be a leader wherever God places you. God's leaders are always servants first and foremost.

When considering all that the Jews had been given, John MacArthur noted that Paul identified an underlying malady or affliction that struck at the heart of the Jews. *"Instead of viewing those divine truths and blessings as a trust from a gracious and forgiving God, they viewed them as their right by merit. They believed they were specially blessed not because of God's grace but because of their own goodness."*

May we with humility receive, manage and employ the gifts we have been given and the advantages and blessings of our faith. God has more than blessed us with all the spiritual riches we need.

Applications . . .

1. Note the places where you act as a teacher or spiritual leader. Ask for humility and wisdom in those places.
2. Give thanks for those who have modeled or continue to model the truth of God for you.
3. What spiritual blessings has God given to you? What do you do with those blessings in your life? Are they employed or forgotten?
4. Make contact with someone who has been a teacher to you. Express your thanks to him or her.