

Romans 2.17 - 3.8 “Does Religion make Me Right with God?”

So GLAD each One of You Joined this Service Today > esp if You VISITOR  
Thankful for TECH – Connect us to God and One Another Unusual TIME  
CHURCHES around World Virtual – Wonder how Many Million Easter Screen?

If there ever be a time when the mind is sensitive, it is when death is near. When I first came to London people listened to the gospel because the cholera was raging terribly – (1854) - there was little scoffing then. Charles Spurgeon

Many SEEK Out CHURCHES to FIND God – Basic PREMISE

“Religion make Me Right with God” -- TODAY Consider if that is TRUE

Letter written 2000 yrs ago – Key Follower of Jesus – Leader of Xtian Church  
Paul – Apostle ‘one sent with authority of Jesus Himself’ to the GENTILES  
Written to CAPITAL City of GENTILE World – ROME

THEME 1.17 “a righteousness from God...freely given by FAITH”

Section Now In began Ch 1, v. 18 - Who NEEDS this RIGHTEOUSNESS?

Paul assumes TONE of Prosecuting ATTORNEY > Argue, Everyone Needs It!

END of Ch 1 – Unbelievers who don’t have LAW – Happy they DON’T!

KNOW the TRUE God > Suppressed TRUTH & Exchanged Truth for LIE

Tragic Result > ‘God gave them up’ – FREE to do what Heart’s Desire > SIN

Ch 2 > HYPOCRITES > High STANDARDS – Not MEET their Own Standards  
Self-Confident Moralists > Guilty before God based on their own Broken Rules

Chs 2 & 3: God’s PROSECUTOR address 3rd group GLOBAL Citizens

RELIGIOUS – Scoff PAGANS & MORALISTS > ‘we have Religion’

TRUST: Prayers – Penance – Performance – Priests – Payments – Pilgrimage

## 1. Responsibility of the Religious

2.17 “Now you, if you call yourself a Jew” Application: RELIGIOUS PERSON  
 Paul writes to JEWISH: Responsibility of RECEIVING God’s REVELATION  
 Fundamentalist – Christian, Islamic, or Hindu / Faithful Church Member

Paul Lists about Dozen SPECIFIC Blessings / Group into 3 CATEGORIES

Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required, and from him to whom they entrusted much, they will demand the more. Luke 12.48

a. Commandments – Privilege of HAVING GOD’S SACRED WORD

2.20 “you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth”

2.17 “you rely on the law” LAW WAS THEIR TREASURE

2.18 “instructed by the law” LAW WAS THEIR TEACHER

2.18 “you know his will...approve of what is superior” LAW WAS TESTER

MOSES ASKED “What other nation is so great as to have such righteous decrees and laws as this body of laws I am setting before you today?” Deuteronomy 4.8

UNDERSTOOD THAT OTHERS NEEDED THIS TEACHING

IMPORTANT TRUTH PRESENTED IN A TONE OF SARCASM

2.19 “you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants”

God’s TRUTH – THIS TREASURE WAS FOR THE NATIONS

Great Advantage > had Revelation of God > World: No FINAL Truth

What is this Virus? Where come From? When will End? When Open Cities?

Will be Vaccination? Will we be Safe? What about all these Dead People?

How can I live my Life with Unseen Virus out there to Kill Me and Family?

God’s Word ENOUGH Answers to Make it thru LIFE by FAITH in Him

Many DETAILS remain shrowded in MYSTERY > Specific Circumstances

HOW did we GET Here? WHY are we HERE? WHERE are we GOING?

Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path. Psalm 119.105

## b. Covenant – Privilege of BEING GOD’S CHOSEN PEOPLE

### 2.17 “your relationship to God” Relationship DEFINED BY COVENANT

PAUL AMPLIFIES THEME “the people of Israel. Theirs is the adoption as sons; theirs the divine glory, the covenants, the receiving of the law, the temple worship and the promises.” Romans 9.4,5

RELIGION INTENDED to be MORE than RITUAL – Covenant Relationship

DANGER OF ANY RELATIONSHIP – Loss of Joy, Purpose, and Meaning

Couple Married for 20 years – Wife: Hurt & Sad – “Do you still love me?”

HUSB “Told you 20 years ago I loved you, if that changes, I will let you know!”

NOT ONLY do WE NEED Marriage Renewal / Israel needed Covenant Renewal

Dangerous Presumption > We have Truth > WE ARE SAFE

God not impressed by EMPTY claims of Orthodoxy, and Neither is the World

DANGER > Think Acceptable to God JUST because we Have the Truth

DEVIL has the Truth TOO! – He can QUOTE it Better than many Christians

What Does impress God & World? Orthodoxy leads to Orthopraxis

I am going to CHARGE Extra for GREEK Words in this Sermon!

Greek: orthos ('right') + doxa ('belief') = correct belief or right thinking

VITAL – ESSENTIAL – Must believe TRUTH > JESUS is the TRUTH

BELIEF shows itself in BIRTH > If DIE to SIN you are BORN AGAIN

Then GOD’S SPIRIT works in our LIVES and bears Fruit of Orthopraxis

Greek: orthos ('right') + praxis ('behavior') = right behavior, good living

REST of Romans > SLOW Process, STILL Sinners, Need Forgiveness Always

My ORTHODOXY is much further developed than my ORTHOPRAXIS

I have believed for Decades – I continue to misbehave EVERY DAY!

My TRUST is in PROMISE & POWER of God > He will FINISH His Work

Romans 3 will CLIMAX in Romans 8

### c. Circumcision – Privilege of BEARING GOD’S COVENANT SIGN

God’s COVENANT w/Abraham, "As for you, you must keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you for the generations to come. This is my covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised." Genesis 17.9

Covenant Promises for ALL Generations / Sign of Covenant

AGAIN – Relationship grown Cold - "Squandered Opportunities"

2.25 “Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.”

SHOCKING WORDS Jews > SAFETY = Circumcision

YOU HAD IT – You’re IN! – GUARANTEED – NO QUESTIONS ASKED

“Our Rabbis have said that no circumcised man will see Hell.”

Rabbi Menachem, Commentary on the Book of Moses

“Circumcision saves from Hell.”

Midrash Tillim

BUT PAUL SAYS – “There is No Free Lunch” / SIGN EMPTY w/out Reality

2.25 “Circumcision HAS VALUE IF you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised.”

NOT SALVATION by OBEDIENCE > OBEDIENCE as SIGN of SALVATION

IDEA DOES NOT COME FROM PAUL – way back in the Old Testament

UNCIRCUMCISED GENTILE WHO OBEYS IS EVEN MORE RIGHTEOUS

2.27 “The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.”

In OT and NT > TRUE Circumcision is Matter of the Heart

“The Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live.”  
Deuteronomy 30.6

“Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your hearts” Jeremiah 4.4

VERY Clear in OT > RELATIONSHIP is God’s Desire, NOT Ritual, Religion

“For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision counts for anything, but only faith working through love.”  
Galatians 5.6

Relationship w/ GOD is SCARY --- esp when you WANT to LIVE IN SIN!

SO, people thought it ENOUGH to Do RITUALS and LOOK RELIGIOUS

But that was NEVER would GOD WANTED right from GARDEN OF EDEN

JESUS and APOSTLES stepped into 1st C Jewish world > OSSIFIED Religion

BRITTLE Old Skeleton EMPTY Rituals > Damn anyone who Challenges Us!

Really GOOD, Highly Respected, Articulate Religious Leaders – Killed JESUS

And ALL the REST of the APOSTLES too!

## 2. Inconsistencies of the Instructed

a. Symbols Communicate Truth / Commandments, Covenant, Circumcision

GOD GIVEN RITUALS TO REPRESENT PRECIOUS TRUTHS about Him

FALSE Message “these things DO NOT MATTER” / GOD SAYS THEY DO!!

Symbols Important = What They Symbolize / SIGN of GOD, Mercy, Covenant

2.26. “If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?”

REALITY REPRESENTED MORE IMPT than SYMBOL ITSELF

CIRCUMCISED – Covenant Symbol = OATH OF OBEDIENCE, LOYALTY

Paul NOT Exactly Saying Uncircumcised Gentiles CAN keep Law  
 BUT If they DO > Will be Reckoned as Circumcised > IN Covenant!

God Dishonored by BLATANT DISREGARD FOR THE SYMBOL WE BEAR  
 Like COMMITTING ADULTERY with Your WEDDING Ring ON

## b. Symbols convey Responsibility

2.16 “God will judge men’s secrets through Jesus Christ”

FAILURE TO DO WHAT SYMBOL POINTS TO EMPTIES ITS MEANING

2.21-23 “you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?”

YOU JEWS ARE THE KEEPERS OF GOD’S COMMANDMENTS

Paul says Let’s Look at a Few –

1. 8<sup>th</sup> Commandment – “You shall not steal” – Do you steal?
2. 7<sup>th</sup> Commandment – “You shall not commit adultery” – Do you?
3. 2<sup>nd</sup> Commandment – “Do not make idols” SOME robbed pagan temples  
 SIMILAR TO THEFT OF NATIONAL TREASURES by Rich People Today

FAILURE TO DO WHAT SYMBOL POINTS TO EMPTIES ITS MEANING

HIGHWAY Sign – “10 Kilometers to Beijing” with Arrow Pointing the Way  
 GREAT SIGN – ENCOURAGE TRAVELERS who are LOST or WEARY  
 IMAGINE if Someone turned Arrow Around / POINTING WRONG WAY

BLESSED SIGN / TURNED INTO A TRAVELER’S CURSE

TRAGEDY OF JEWISH APOSTASY / HEARTBREAKING TO PAUL

10.1 “my heart's desire & prayer to God for the Israelites is that they may be saved”

## HOW BITTER THESE WORDS OF PAUL TO THE JEWS

Paul ends his cross-examination with a burst of accusation:

2.24 "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

Sacred Name of God which Jews Never Repeat > Blasphemed by Gentiles

“If Mark Blair is Christian --- I will Never Believe...Mark Blair a PASTOR??”

Nathan told David, “. . . by doing this you have made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt”  
2 Samuel 12.14

Abraham > told Pharaoh AND Abimelech that Beautiful Sarah was Sister

Those PAGAN Leaders were More Righteous than that Covenant Man of God

Stuart Briscoe > Man embezzled large sum \$ from Bank both worked

reason embezzled > two wives and families to support

When apprehended and fired, stunned everyone by saying,

“I am very sorry for what I have done, and I need to know whether I should fulfill my preaching commitments on Sunday in our local church.”

Briscoe says that in the following weeks he spent a great part of his time mending the damage done by that man’s blatant inconsistency.

his fellow workers not only despised the man,

“. . . were quick to dismiss the church he belonged to as a ‘bunch of hypocrites,’ the gospel he professed to believe as a ‘lot of hogwash,’ and the God he claimed to serve as ‘nonexistent.’”

c. Symbols create Humility – or at least THEY SHOULD

COVENANT – made by Grace, not based on OUR MERIT or WORTH

“I will confirm my covenant between me and you and will greatly increase your numbers.” Abram fell facedown  
Genesis 17.2,3

GOD MADE A COVENANT WITH DAVID Then King David went in and sat before the LORD, and he said: "Who am I, O Sovereign LORD, and what is my family, that you have brought me this far?...Is this your usual way of dealing with man, O Sovereign LORD?"  
2 Samuel 7.18

WHO are WE that GOD WOULD INVITE US INTO SOLEMN COVENANT?

COMMANDMENTS – should create Humility > We have BROKEN THEM

What we done with our God given spiritual opportunities?

TODAY we have Mixed UP RELIGION for RELATIONSHIP with God in X

“Are you a believer?” “Of course. I’ve been Member of 1<sup>st</sup> Church 25 yrs”

“Are you a believer?” “I’m a Catholic! Does that answer your question?”

“Are you a believer?” “Why yes, I was baptized right here in BICF ZGC”

Christian Family Heritage? God has no Grandchildren – Family pointed the way,  
But WE must Decide for Him, YOU will face Him as Lord and Judge

Christian Sacraments: Baptism & Lord’s Supper – Signs of Blessings and Grace  
IF you WILL NOT REPENT – become signs of Judgment and Cursing

NEED to Stay HUMBLE, GRATEFUL, and Before our GRACIOUS Savior  
Someone come to know Christ just a few weeks earlier excitedly tell another  
Christian, “I have found the most wonderful verse in all the Bible. It’s John 3:16  
— ‘For God so loved the world . . .’”

New BELIEVER invited to TESTIFY

Jesus is &^#ing Cool, Following Jesus is +\*%ing Awesome!

New Believer in Portland

Shocked SILENCE! – Stood Applause! --- BABY Brother in FAMILY!

### 3. Truth Passes Every Test

IMPRESSED IN ROMANS – tightly reasoned arguments of Apostle Paul

SOMETIMES WE CAN SAY TOO MUCH > GO TOO FAR

Lawyer defending man accused of biting off another man's ear in bar brawl

TO EYEWITNESS “Did you actually see my client bite off the man's ear?” NO!

GOOD PLACE TO STOP – THAT WAS EXACTLY ANSWER HE NEEDED

FOOLISHLY CONTINUED “What did you see?” / “I saw him spit the ear out”

Some THOUGHT PAUL had GONE TOO FAR – being a Jew means Nothing

2.28,29 A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.

IF GOD TREATS Jew and Gentile Alike – No Favoritism / Why be a Jew?

a. God's Word 3.2 “the very words of God”

3.1 “What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God.”

PRIMACY OF SCRIPTURE / conveys all Blessings

ONLY SOURCE OF ETERNAL TRUTH – all else is Human Speculation

Only Light of Grace – Only Word of Hope – Infallible source of Guidance

“Scripture, although also written of men, is not of men nor from men, but from God”  
Martin Luther

“This is the principle that distinguishes our religion from all others, that we know that God has spoken, to us and are fully convinced that the prophets did not speak of themselves, but, as organs of the Holy Spirit, uttered only that which they had been commissioned from heaven to declare.”  
John Calvin

“The authority and truth of Scripture is not an obscure issue reserved for the private debate and entertainment of theologians; it is relevant, indeed critical for

every serious Christian – layman, pastor, and theologian alike. My convictions have come from...behind prison walls where Christians grapple in hand-to-hand combat with the prince of darkness. In our prison fellowships where the Bible is proclaimed as God's holy and inerrant revelation, believers grow and discipleship deepens. Christians live their faith with power. Where the Bible is not so proclaimed faith withers and dies. Christianity without biblical fidelity is merely another passing fad in an age of passing fads." Charles Colson

## b. God's Faithfulness

IF GOD MADE AN ETERNAL COVENANT WITH THE JEWS,  
AND THE SIGN OF THAT COVENANT IS CIRCUMCISION,  
HOW COULD ANY CIRCUMCISED JEW BE LOST IN THEIR SIN?

PAUL devotes THREE CHAPTERS (9-11) to FULLY ANSWER THIS ??

3.3 What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness?

1. God is Sovereign > All He does is JUST

3.4 "Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar."

2. God is FAITHFUL > He will not BREAK HIS PROMISES

3.4 "As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge."

GOD NEVER PROMISED TO SAVE ALL JEWS, OR

ALL PROFESSING Xtians, OR ALL BAPTIZED Xtians

GOD'S PROMISE IS TO SAVE ALL WHO CALL UPON HIM IN FAITH

If you are to be Saved, it is will not be apart from Faith in Jesus

GOD the SON / GOD the SAVIOR / GOD the SOVEREIGN

## c. Our Sin

SINCE our Sin Displays God's Righteousness > Why are we Punished?

3.5,6 “But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world?”

A GOOD END DOES NOT JUSTIFY A BAD MEANS > Utilitarianism

How can GOD PUNISH SIN if my Falsehood ENHANCES GOD’S GLORY?

3.7 Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" Why not say--as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say--"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is deserved.

ANTINOMIANISM – Saved by Grace / more sin displays more grace

Paul does not dignify this with a thorough Answer, THEY ARE CONDEMNED

But the TRUTH of God remains UNCHANGED

To ADD your RITUAL to the Relationship is to REJECT Finished Work of X

Adding your Supposed Righteousness says that Jesus is NOT Enough

Besides you are Terribly Deceived if you think you have any R. to ADD!

Ezekiel 33 > Describes Self-deception & Hypocrisy of Religious People

God addresses Ezekiel the Preacher: “As for you, son of man, your countrymen are talking together about you by the walls and at the doors of the houses, saying to each other, ‘Come and hear the message that has come from the Lord.’”

Ezekiel 33.30

People Talk about Going to Hear the Preaching of the Word

GOD SEES True State of their Hearts: “My people come to you, as they usually do, and sit before you to listen to your words, but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion, but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain.”

Ezekiel 33.31

They Sit in Congreg > Look like Real Thing > but Hearts Set Making Money

“Indeed, to them you are nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well, for they hear your words but do not put them into practice.”  
Ezekiel 33.32

God Never Fooled: Sadly many Earnest, Confident, Religious people going Hell  
Just like DOCTORS / Health Workers get VIRUS in the HOSPITALS > DIE  
MANY People get FALSE GOSPEL right in churches > will DIE Eternally

Some PARISHONERS and PASTORS with Perfect Doctrine will hear Jesus:

“Depart from me, I never knew you”

1738 London, England > reading of a Commentary on Romans by Martin Luther  
Young intellectual who belonged to OXFORD HOLY CLUB was in attendance  
AS faithful member of this club / did good works, charity, spiritual exercises  
BEEN MISSIONARY TO AMERICA FOR 2 YEARS / Disillusioned, Empty

He describes what happened:

“About a quarter before nine, while he (*Martin Luther*) was describing (*Paul’s teaching about*) the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone, for my salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death” John Wesley

that Night JOHN WESLEY / received Salvation by Grace through Faith  
AS DESCRIBED BY LUTHER / AS REVEALED THROUGH PAUL  
BECAME Instrument of God to Ignite GREAT AWAKENING / UK & USA

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Romans 2.<sup>17</sup>Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God; <sup>18</sup>if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; <sup>19</sup>if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, <sup>20</sup>an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth -- <sup>21</sup>you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? <sup>22</sup>You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? <sup>23</sup>You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? <sup>24</sup>As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you." <sup>25</sup>Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. <sup>26</sup>If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? <sup>27</sup>The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker. <sup>28</sup>A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. <sup>29</sup>No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

Romans 3.<sup>1</sup>What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? <sup>2</sup>Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God. <sup>3</sup>What if some did not have faith? Will their lack of faith nullify God's faithfulness? <sup>4</sup>Not at all! Let God be true, and every man a liar. As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge." <sup>5</sup>But if our unrighteousness brings out God's righteousness more clearly, what shall we say? That God is unjust in bringing his wrath on us? (I am using a human argument.) <sup>6</sup>Certainly not! If that were so, how could God judge the world? <sup>7</sup>Someone might argue, "If my falsehood enhances God's truthfulness and so increases his glory, why am I still condemned as a sinner?" <sup>8</sup>Why not say--as we are being slanderously reported as saying and as some claim that we say--"Let us do evil that good may result"? Their condemnation is deserved.