

# THIS WEEK'S MESSAGE

MARCH 13TH - 14TH, 2021 // BOOK OF ROMANS

## NO EXCUSE (ROMANS 2:1-5)

In the 2nd half of chapter 1, Paul unpacked why (and how) God's wrath is revealed against all humanity, but especially how that looks in the gentile world (1:18).

- The Roman church was made up of Jews & Gentiles. So, Paul is most likely thinking of objections Jewish believers might have to this teaching.
- How could they be just as guilty before God?

Paul is especially in tune with the mindset of a religious Jew, after all, this is what he'd been before meeting Christ.

- It's almost as if he anticipates the objections from those who envision themselves as generally "moral" in their conduct and are at this point congratulating themselves that they're not like the people Paul described in chapter 1.
- Religious & moral people are just as guilty before God as those who are rebellious and hedonistic.

What Paul is going to unpack is the reality that religion is often just a veneer covering a heart that is still every bit as sinful as everyone else's.

- When religious people, "pass judgment on others", Paul says they're actually "condemning themselves" (vs. 1).
- Why? Because in their heart, **religious people are guilty of doing the exact same things** rebellious, hedonistic people do.

This was Jesus' whole point of the sermon on the mount in Matthew 5-7: **sins like adultery and murder are primarily sins of the heart.**

- When we judge another person, we point to a standard outside of our self- and that standard condemns everyone, not just, "obvious sinners" (vs. 2-3).
- Just knowing the "law" doesn't make you suddenly able to keep it.

## BEING RELIGIOUS CAN'T SAVE YOU (VS. 3B)

We so often suppose that simply being **moral, practicing religion, and being against all the "bad people" in the world** will help us escape the judgment of God.

- The moralist & religious are every bit as guilty before God as all the "bad people".
- Why? Because religion and morality can never change our hearts that are full of the same darkness and evil.

## MISUNDERSTANDING GOD'S GOODNESS (VS. 4)

Many people look at the good things in their lives and assume, "the reason God has blessed me **MUST be because I'm a pretty good guy/gal**".

- The absence of immediate judgment leads some to believe that they're not guilty.
- But when we don't have Jesus in our lives, God's kindness and forbearance towards us is meant to lead us to repentance, not to be assure us our own righteousness apart from Him.

## THERE WILL BE FUTURE JUDGMENT FOR THE RELIGIOUS (VS. 5)

The moralist thinks he's earning brownie points with God as **he condemns all the "sinners" around him**; when actually, he's storing up for himself future wrath.

- Every day when we sin without repenting (even if it's a "small", private, hidden sin) we're depositing future wrath for ourselves into the account of God's judgment.

## NO PARTIALITY (ROMANS 2:6-16)

God will judge the moral and religious (just like the rebellious and immoral) because their works also fall short of God's perfect standard.

- This passage can be confusing, so we need a little clarity.
- In verses 6-8, Paul is not saying that **we can be good enough to earn eternal life.**
- Eph. 2:8, "...by grace you have been saved, through faith- and this is not of yourselves."

Verse 6 is a quote from Ps. 62, where **the Psalmist laments about religious people who have an external practice of religion**, but internally are still filled with wickedness.

- On the final day, God is going to look beyond the outward performance of religion and judge the real "works" that matter - the inward state of the heart that is manifested in a changed and fruitful life (vs. 7).

Even though we will never be perfect, true saving faith will always result in a lifestyle of obedience and godly living.

- True obedience, godly character, and a heart of Christ - like love for humanity can only come out of a heart and life that has transformed by the gospel.
- Religion can change the outside, but it can't make someone stop being "self-seeking" or "obedient to the truth" in their heart (vs. 8).

Because all fall short of God's perfect standard, God's wrath will come to all who do evil - without respect to whether they are Jew, Gentile, religious, moral, or hedonistic (vs. 9-10).

- "God shows no partiality" (vs. 11). The word partiality comes from two Greek words put together - "to receive" and "face".
- It means to judge based on externals or preconceived notions.

But God will not judge human beings on the basis of how they appear to others! He will judge based on the true state of their hearts (1 Sam. 16:7).

- Vs. 12-13 speak to the idea that, God's judgment is not withheld simply because someone has heard the law; it's only held back if someone has actually kept the law.
- But we're not **capable of keeping the law, and that's precisely Paul's point** - just knowing the rules doesn't save us.

But what about people who don't have the law?

- "The work of the law is written on their hearts" (vs. 15) - every person has a conscience because they've been created in the image of God.
- Our consciences "bear witness" when we do evil, and our "conflicting thoughts" accuse us.
- The problem is that every person has violated their own conscience, which is **the law of God that's been written on our hearts.**

Those who **have the law of God can't keep it and are therefore to be judged by it (vs. 12).**

- Those who don't have the law of God have still **violated God's commands because they're violated their own consciences (vs. 15).**
- God doesn't play favorites or show partiality.
- On the day of judgment, God will judge the "secrets of men" (vs. 16)- He'll look past the religious veneer and see the filth and depravity of the human heart.

## NO ADVANTAGE (ROMANS 2:17-29)

To those with delusions of their own spiritual superiority, Paul is saying, "**when you look down deep into the motives of your heart**, don't you do the very things you tell others not to do?" (vs. 17-23)

- You who "teach others, do you not teach yourself?"
- Paul is basically asking, "You have the law, but do you keep it? **You can see how everybody else breaks the law**, but can you see how you break it, also?"

Religiosity brings about a theoretical, concept - only stance towards God's Word.

- In other words, **religious people like to learn concepts of truth more than they like to be confronted and changed by truth.**
- They want truth for information so they judge others, but not **transformation so they can be changed to look more like Christ.**
- To the religious, Paul gives a test (vs. 17-23).

You say, "don't steal"- but there are plenty of examples of you taking more than what belongs to you.

- You say, "don't commit adultery"- but you sexually fantasize about people you're not married to.
- You claim to, "abhor idols"- but you're guilty of "robbing temples" (you want the same thing a pagan idol provides- prosperity, luxury, comfort, wealth, etc.)

God's name is blasphemed because of you (vs. 24)- all the "Gentiles" (unchurched people) can see through the thin veneer of religion and notice that you have the same corrupt heart as anyone else.

- And they don't want anything to do with God because of **the horrible misrepresentation of Him given to them by religious, self-righteous, hypocritical people.**

## CIRCUMCISION (VS. 25-29)

Circumcision was an outward sign of God's covenant towards the Jews, and many Jews hearing Paul's argument might say that their salvation happened when they got circumcised, therefore, keeping the law wasn't needed.

- Many Christians feel the same way about things like **baptism, the sinner's prayer, confirmation, communion, etc.**

Circumcision and baptism do the same thing that a label on a can does - if the outer label doesn't match the inside, something's wrong!

- Salvation doesn't occur through ceremonies that are outward & physical (vs. 28).
- Salvation happens inwardly and is a matter of the heart (vs. 29).
- True conversion that results in being made right with God is "by the Spirit, not by the letter".

When someone becomes part of the family of God (a "Jew"), the important thing to them is "the praise of God", not the "praise of man" (vs. 29).

- The evidence of our right standing with God isn't shown in religious activity, pedigree or performance, but in the work of God in our hearts which is then displayed by the fruit of our lives.
- **Religion can't save us or truly transform us.**

## WHAT RELIGION CAN DO...

- Make you an expert at judging and condemning everyone but yourself.
- Create in you entitlement, self-righteousness, and a casual attitude towards your sin.
- It can make you smug, overly-sensitive, critical, hypocritical, and insecure.
- It can blind you to your need for God and Christian community/accountability.

God doesn't judge on a curve- your sin is just as bad as the sin of anyone else (vs. 1-2).

- God judges according to what you've done, not what others have noticed (vs. 5-6).

God doesn't play favorites, and your religious activity or pedigree won't earn you brownie points (vs. 11-15).

- God will judge the secrets of the heart- your motives, intentions, desires, hidden thoughts, and inner hatred, lust, and rebellion (vs. 16).

God's judgment is according to the reality of your heart- not your religious profession (vs. 17-29).

- What the Gospel is inviting you into is NOT outward conformity to a set of rules, laws, and morals- you're being offered new heart (Ezekiel 36:26).

## A NEW HEART.

- The only way for religious or irreligious people to be saved is to admit our need for grace and our need for a new heart.
- Do you want a new heart? Do you want to be transformed?
- It must begin with you forsaking both your sin AND your false sense of goodness.