

## RELIGION CAN'T SAVE YOU

Romans 2:17~29, part 2

**T:** Beloved, I want to begin by making a clear statement to the truth contained in these verses... **Religion Can't Save You**... That the "Only Hope" for any of us here this morning, is that of a "Changed Heart" which only comes through Jesus Christ! To have an "Outward" adherence to religion, yet not an inward change of heart, will be of absolutely no value to any one, come judgment day.

**NO MAN** will be "justified before God" through an "External Adherence" to religion.

The man Paul describes in verses 17~20...

That at "Face Value" this man "appears" to be a Jew...

The name **Jew** is synonymous with the **worship** of God...The **People** of God...

In scripture, there are only two kinds of people..."Jews and Gentiles."

The man Paul describes in verses 17~20...

In all "Outward appearances, appears to be one of the Children of Abraham"

**T:** But that is just Paul's point...  
- **When God judges men...he will not judge as men do, "superficially."**  
Paul had just stated in **verse 16**...  
<sup>16</sup>*In the day when God shall judge...what?...the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my gospel.*

The issue with God is not the "Outward Form"...but the "Inward Reality!"

<sup>28</sup>*For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly...* <sup>29</sup>*But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly;*

✦ Paul's point is...**Regardless of how "Religious" a man may be...  
...unless his heart has been "changed" by the "Grace of God", he will perish!**

At the end of verse 20, Paul sums up his description of this man by saying...

...**which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law...**

The key word here is "**form**..." *μορᾶ-φο-σις ... formation, appearance, shape;*

Paul uses this same word in 2Timothy 3:5, where he warns of *false teachers* in the last days...

<sup>1</sup>*This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. <sup>2</sup>For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy,*

<sup>3</sup>*Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, <sup>4</sup>Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;*

<sup>5</sup>*Having a **form** of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.*

I don't know about you...but I was shocked to read what Paul said in verse 5, after listening to all the characteristics he used to describe these men up to this point...

<sup>5</sup>*Having a **form** of godliness*...? What in the world is Paul talking about? For there's "**Not One**" characteristic that he names up to that point, that could even be remotely mistaken for "**godliness.**"

<sup>2</sup>For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, <sup>3</sup>Without natural affection, trucebreakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, <sup>4</sup>Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God;

★ Paul is speaking to how “*Superficial*” the worship of God will be!

It's really a passage that speaks to the “*Spiritual Deadness*” of society in the last days... It speaks to how, that in the last days, instead of a “*heart felt*” love for God, instead of a humble submission and worship of God, instead of having repentant hearts and surrendered lives... Many will simply manifest a “*Form*” of godliness...meaning they will carry the bibles, attend religious functions, etc... But doing so with unregenerate hearts...

They may have a “*Form*” of Godliness...But the content of their life will “*Manifest*” a life lived for SELF!

I cannot begin to stress to you, the “*Validity*” of that passage... The days in which Paul spoke of here are no doubt, the days in which we are living!

The man Paul describes here in Romans 2:17~20, has a “*Form*” of Godliness... He attends “*Synagogue*”, he affirms the scripture as God's Holy Word, he even has a good grasp and understanding to it's teachings... This man *affirms* and boldly declares that the “*Law of Moses*” (*what we'd call 10 commandments*) is God's Holy and divine standard for all men. A standard that all men are to heed and respect and honor!

By his “*external adherence*” to religion, he “*appears*” to be one who worships God...

In verses 17~20, Paul describes what he “*Appears to be...*”  
(Vs 21~27) Paul describes, “*What he is...*” his day-to-day life reveals a different man...

<sup>21</sup>Thou therefore which teach another, teach thou not thyself?

...thou that preach a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

<sup>22</sup>Thou that say a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?

...thou that abhor idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? (*Idolatry*)

<sup>23</sup>Thou that make thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonor thou God? <sup>24</sup>For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles **through you**, as it is written.

The “*key*” in understanding this section, is to realize that this man did not “*Physically*” sin against these commandments. For this is a man that would never steal a thing... He believes in being faithful to his wife...to cheat on his wife would be something he would never do. And when it comes to “*idols*,” why he'd never be so foolish as to bow down to a statue! God is not some “*calves*” that is to be bowed down to and worshiped!

This man would **never** “*feel justified*” before God if he were guilty of actually physically committing any of these! As a matter of fact, it is those who he looks on in society that physically does these things that he condemns in 2:1. This brings Paul's point there full circle!

**(2:1)** <sup>1</sup>Therefore thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judges: for wherein thou judges another, thou condemn thyself; for thou that judges doest the same things.

A charge that this man would adamantly disagree with Paul, stating that he had NEVER done those things! This man “*sees himself*” as just before God, because he doesn't do those things...

By all “outward appearances,” the man Paul is speaking too here has “*the image of a really good man!*” And that is where the greatest danger of “Religion” lies...it’s very deceptive in that way. By conforming to “Religion”, this man has deceived himself that he is “just” before God, while all the while, his day-to-day life manifest that his heart is not been changed! **He still lives his life for self!**

In verses 21~24... Paul states that “**Lost men**” can “*See right through him...*”

That the “Content” of his life is quiet different that his “form...”

He’s identified with the “Spiritual” but its obvious to those around him, he’s “Carnal!” His life manifests his love for here and now, a serious lacking of “faithfulness to God and his work.” He serves self... He gives his life to his will and ways...

And because the “Form” of his life...and the “Content” of his life are so different... He actually causes those who don’t have any affiliation with the church, to want nothing to do with it...

<sup>23</sup>*Thou that make thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonor thou God?* <sup>24</sup>*For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles **through you**, as it is written.*

You see... God’s commands are not carnal! They are spiritual...

Paul is not asking this man, if he has ever “*stolen from another man...*” so much as he’s asking him if he has “*Stolen from God?*”

Paul is not asking this man, if he has committed “*adultery on his wife...*” so much as he’s asking him if he has “*Committed adultery on God?*” (He doesn’t love God...he loves the world)

Paul is not asking this man, if he has “*bowed down to a statue...*” so much as he’s asking him if he what he serves...**what he lives for...** “**THINGS OR GOD?**” (Materialistic)

He’s really no different than them really, *except he goes to church!*

In verses 25~27... Paul states that “**Lost men**” can keep the “*Righteous of the law*” without even coming to church!

There’s people out there that have never been to church, and maybe never will, who keep the righteousness of the Law! They don’t steal, they don’t drink, they don’t commit adultery, they don’t bow down to little statues...

But that doesn’t declare them just before God does it?

No... And that’s Paul’s point! Nor does it you!

This man was “*Just as Guilty*” as the “*Gentiles*” (Society) he was condemning!

In verse 3, Paul reminds him again of his guilt...<sup>3</sup>*And think thou this, O man, that judges them which do such things, and doest the same, that thou shall escape the judgment of God?*

This man, who in verse 1 looked on “society” around him, and saw those in adultery, those who stole for others, saw those who worshiped nothing... and declared them guilty before God! While he felt that he himself was “innocent” because he didn’t do those things...by his “supposed obedience” to the Law of God! Which gave him a “Form” of godliness...

This “Religious” man has the same problem that the “Gentile” has...

**Disobedience to God...**

Something that no amount of “Adherence to Religion” could ever fix!

I want to close with a clear word of truth... Religion can't save you... The "Only Hope" for any of us here this morning, is that of a "*Changed Heart*" which only comes through Jesus Christ! To have an "*Outward*" adherence to religion, yet not have an inward change of heart, will be of absolutely no value to anyone come judgment day.

Like the Gentiles...he needed a "*New Heart!*" That's where the Cross comes in...

<sup>28</sup>*For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh:*

<sup>29</sup>*But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God.*