

Romans 2:17-29

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[0 : 00] Take your Bibles, turn with me to the book of Romans, Romans chapter 2, Romans chapter 2, I'm going to start or pick back up in verse 17 going to the end of the chapter.

Verse 29, Romans chapter 2, verses 17 through 29. Just continuing to make our way through the letter to the church at Rome.

Last week I was blessed to be loved on by the congregation, but Mark Bryant did a great job filling in, preaching, taking my place. He told Carrie, usually I know it's kept as a surprise, but Wednesday night that week I had kind of struggled in preaching.

I kept coughing and he told Carrie, he said, tell Billy Joe he doesn't have to be a surprise. He preached Sunday so he can rest his voice and I'm preaching for him. So that was an amazing thing just to let the mind stop every now and then.

So I was blessed to come in and to be a part. Some of you were blessed to come and hear Brother Mark and you came back this morning. So, so thankful for you to be back. You may say, well, I should have stopped then, but that's okay.

[1 : 21] But we are back in the book of Romans as we have been looking at the foundational doctrines of our faith. As we find it laid out through the book of Romans, as Paul is writing here, probably the greatest letter throughout all church history has the most impact throughout history on the church and what the church really believes than any other letter of the New Testament.

And I am so thankful to have the privilege to go through it with you. It's the first time the Lord's ever opened up the door to allow me to preach through the book of Romans. We've only made it thus far, but I came to Christ through personal study of the book of Romans as is the testimony of so many others throughout history.

So it is with great privilege that I had the chance to come now after a number of years, seeing its truth grip my heart, maybe allowing the Lord to use me where the truth can really grip your heart. If you are physically able and desire to do so, I'm going to ask if you'll join with me as we stand together and we read the word of God from Romans chapter 2, starting in verse 17 and going to the end of the chapter, which gets us down to verse 29.

The word of God says, But if you bear the name Jew and rely upon the law and boast in God and know his will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the law and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth.

[2 : 50] You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one should not steal, shall not steal, do you steal? You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?

You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who boast in the law, through your breaking the law, do you dishonor God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you just as it is written.

For indeed, circumcision is of value if you practice the law. But if you are a transgressor of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?

And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the law, will he not judge you who, though having the letter of the law and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?

For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the spirit, not by the letter.

[3 : 56] And his praise is not from men, but from God. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you so much for this day. God, we thank you for the praises we've been able to sing.

Thank you for the testimony and song we've been able to hear. God, we thank you for the truths that have already comforted our hearts and eased our minds. We pray now, as we come to your word, we pray that its truth would resonate within us.

Lord, that it would show us more of who we are, more of who you are. Lord, that it would draw us closer to you. God, we give you thanks in advance for what it is you're going to say to us. And Lord, we look so forward to hearing from you.

Pray that it would not be hindered by me or by any other distraction in this place. And Lord, that you would be glorified and honored. And we ask it in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated. Amen.

I'm so thankful that we've had the opportunity to come together and to praise. I thank you, sister, for singing that song for us. What truth contains in that song of not who the world says we are, but who God himself says we are.

[4 : 55] The truth that he speaks into our lives of who we are as his people. It has been a joy to go with the young adults through that study of being who we are because of who he is and the impact that that has upon our life.

And we spoke of that in Sunday school this morning, just looking at one another of who we are and because of who we are in Christ, the impact that he has upon the rest of our life. It is something that resonates in every human being.

It's something which resounds within every person who has ever lived is this desire to know who they are based upon the one who has created them. God has implanted in every soul eternity.

As we find from the book of Ecclesiastes chapter 3, he has set eternity in the heart of all men. And all men desire to know their creator, whether or not they acknowledge that.

And we have seen these truths in the first two chapters of the book of Romans. You know as we introduce this book coming into it, that if we could make it through the first three, we would be okay.

[5 : 53] Because Paul takes three chapters in this great work not to comfort us, but rather to expose us. Paul takes the same approach that the Bible does. When you open up the Word of God, and if you choose to read the Word of God just in the order in which it is contained, bound by the pages in your Bible, you will open it up to the book of Genesis, and you will start in Genesis 1 about God's glorious creation.

Genesis 2 will speak further of God's creation of man, how he formed man, and he fashioned the lady. And then you will come upon it very quickly about the fall of man.

The first 11 chapters of the entire Bible, chapters 1 through 11 of the book of Genesis, confront us with every problem of man. We see lying and thievery, distrust, murdering, adultery.

We see all of these things contained, unbelieving, all of these truths about who man is contained in the first 11 chapters of the entire Bible. And in Genesis 12 to the end of the book of Revelation, dispels for us how God deals with man's problem.

And it is just like God, to be honest, isn't it? It is just like God to tell us who we are, to confront us with the reality as ugly as it may be, to let us see ourselves in the mirror of his image, not in the mirror of our image, so that he can tell us what he can make us and who he can call us.

[7 : 13] And when we come to the book of Romans, we are confronted with that same truth, that Paul takes three chapters talking to us about the reality of man and his desperate condition.

That we are not told that man is okay. We are not told that man has it all figured out. We are not told that man is doing a pretty good job. As a matter of fact, Paul takes three chapters laying out the terrible position of mankind.

And then he goes into this glorious truth of God's grace and redemption and mercy. We looked in the end of chapter 1 that this reality of all mankind suppressing the truth of God, suppressing the knowledge of a holy God that innately within us we know there is a God, but the desire for ourselves is really that for ourselves, and we suppress that truth.

And then we began to look at the good man and the upright man, and are they okay in God's image? Well, this morning we come to the fallacy of religion.

The fallacy of religion. Because many may read the first few verses of Romans and say, Well, I'm not like the wicked man that God has given over.

[8 : 23] Surely I am better than they. And they may come to the second chapter and say, Well, I might not be a good man as Paul laid out a good man. I'm a pretty good man, but at least I'm a religious man.

Or at least I'm a religious individual. See, Paul is making his progression based upon those that would read this book or this letter. He is writing it to the church at Rome, which he did not start. Nobody knows who started it. Neither he nor Peter nor James nor John. None of them had anything to do with planning the church at Rome. They have never seen his face. They have never heard him preach publicly.

They have never seen his testimony or heard his testimony. They've heard about him, and Paul has heard about them. But we know there are multiple churches around the city of Rome, and he is writing this letter to them.

And he is trying to tell them it doesn't matter if you're bad. It doesn't matter if you're good. And it doesn't matter if you're religious. We all stand on the same playing field. And we all stand in the desperate need of God's grace.

[9 : 19] Because man has within him this wickedness that wants to hide behind something of a holy God. And the one thing that has been transcendent across time is this thing called religion.

Every people group, every tribe, every nation, every known individual on the face of the earth that has ever been located worships something.

They have something that they adore, something that they uphold. Worship is the natural outflow of man, and we try to fill that void with this thing called religion.

Now, I chose my words kind of intentionally when I said the fallacy of religion. According to Noah Webster, the word fallacy means to be deceptive or to deceive, to appear to be true but to actually be false.

And this is a fair assessment of religion. See, when we come to Christ, we don't come seeking a religion. We come seeking a relationship. But Paul is writing to people who are hiding not only behind their goodness, but also behind their religion.

[10 : 33] He starts here and he says, But if you bear the name Jew and rely upon the law and boast in God, just stop right here. Number one, we see that religion produces an unmerited confidence.

One of the fallacies of religion is that religion produces an unmerited or unworthy or unearned confidence. He said, But if you bear the name Jew and rely upon the law and boast in God, he is writing not only to the Gentile believers, but now he is narrowing his escape down to the Jewish believers.

The church at Rome would have been filled with Gentiles and Jews alike. This is something we see when Paul finally gets to Rome and changed, that there are Jewish brethren and there are Gentile brethren. It is a mixed multitude.

Now, the Jews could have possibly started reading this letter and said, Yes, yes. See, these people, these Gentiles, a Gentile, by the way, is anyone that is not Jewish. So if you are not of Jewish descent, you are a Gentile.

Anywhere else in the world, you are a Gentile. And they would have been reading this and they would have said, Yes, yes. Paul is exactly right. These Gentiles, they are desperately wicked.

These Gentiles, they really need God's grace. These Gentiles can never be good enough.

[11 : 42] But praise be to God, I'm not a Gentile. I'm a Jew. See, I am from the select group. I am from the peculiar people. I am from God's chosen nation. I am a Jew.

And I like how he put it on there. If you bear the name Jew in the New American Standard, it has parentheses around it, meaning the significance of the name. And he is writing to a people group who, more than any other people group in the world, have stood behind their heritage, even today, as a sign of their steadfast relationship with God and their worthiness to be in God's presence.

If you had to have a poster child for religion, and I don't mean this to be degrading at all, it would be the Jewish nation. It would be the Jewish nation who were given the commandments of God.

They were given all the laws that we find in the Old Testament. They were the chosen people of God. He raised them up through grace and mercy. And somehow or another, over time, they began to rely upon who they were instead of whose they were.

And they began to go through all the rituals and all the practices. It is said that by the time the Jewish people in Jesus' day wrote down their law in a book called the Mishnah, they took it from the oral law to the written law.

[12 : 49] They had over 634 specific commandments of what they could do and could not do. They had religion down to a science. As a matter of fact, they had perfected being religious.

They could tell you how much of your cumin and how much of your mint you should give to the temple. They could tell you how much of the produce of your field you could give them, how far you could carry a coffee cup on the Sabbath, who you could go talk to on the Sabbath, and who you could not go talk to.

They could tell you what you could touch, what you could not touch, what would make you clean, what would make you unclean. Friend, listen to me. They were the religious of the religious. And there were people within the Jewish community who were even more religious called the Pharisees. And Paul is now addressing those people who are standing in that name. And they say, we are the Jewish people. There is nothing wrong with us. Shortly after the time of Christ's crucifixion, burial, and resurrection, the Jewish nation became so proud in their personal identity, they began to see themselves as the only people of God.

We see that throughout history. As they began to see themselves as the people of God simply because of who they were by birth. And Paul said, but there's a problem. You may have the religion down, but it's not good enough.

[14:05] He says, if you bear the name Jew, he says, and you boast in the law, that you rely upon the law and boast in God. Now, first of all, let's stop right here and say, is there a benefit for the Jewish people?

Yes, Paul will get to that later in the book of Romans, but just so you see a few of that here. Is there a benefit to being a part of the Jewish community even in the day of Paul? Look at this. He says, you know his will.

If you were of the Jewish people, you didn't have to wonder what the will of God was. You had the law, the Old Testament. And you could read the Old Testament and say, the will of God is that I would worship him, that I would obey him, and that I would stay with him.

No other people group in the world had that but the Jewish people, okay? He said, you know the will of God. That's one of the benefits. You can approve of the things that are essential. These are the things that are essential. The Jewish people knew what God saw as important.

And this was one of the benefits. He said, you have been instructed out of the law. They had the benefit of knowledge. They had the benefit of education. And they had the benefit of insight into the very heart of God.

[15:03] They had everything contained in the Old Testament scripture. But Paul says, but wait a minute. Having it doesn't mean anything. Because we're talking about an unmerited confidence.

Look at what he says. And you are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth.

You therefore who teach another do you teach yourself. Here is the danger of religion. Religion has all of these things available to it.

It begins to trust in the things that are available. It begins to trust in the benefit of it. It begins to trust in the things rather than the person who gave it. And he said, you Jewish people, you have the right stuff.

But having the right stuff doesn't mean anything. Because you can teach others, but are you teaching yourself? You're confident because you possess it, but does it possess you?

[16:09] You're confident because you know it, but does it know you? You who tell others not to steal, are you stealing? You who tell others not to commit adultery, are you committing adultery? You who tell others not to lie, are you lying?

See, this is what's happening. Paul says, let's talk about more of what you're practicing than what you're possessing. And this is the unmerited confidence of religion.

Friend, we're not trying to pick on the Jewish nation. We're not doing that at all. Because there is grave danger, even in church membership, even being a member of such and such church.

You say, oh, well, I'm a member of this church. And I'm a member of that church. And I'm a member of that. Listen, having your name on the roll of a church is not the same as the church living inside of you.

Having your name and possessing all of the knowledge and even having a number of Bibles.

Friend, listen, I've got probably seven or eight Bibles that I've preached out of throughout the years stacked up on the shelf in my office.

[17:11] And those Bibles are not benefiting me at all. Because it is only the Bibles that I'm opening up that are opening up me. It is only the Bibles that I'm allowing to penetrate into my life

that are beginning to affect me.

Having the truth and having the knowledge of the truth and having all of these benefits available to us really don't mean a thing if they don't have us.

And Paul says, here's the unmerited confidence of religion. You think just because you know it and just because you have it, then you must be okay.

And that was the danger of the Jewish nation. Paul says that's not the case. Too often we find that religion puffs one up while his life often lets him down.

We see that religion and knowing that someone is a part of something would cause one to rise up and be proud of themselves and to think that they are okay. And cause one to think that they have everything together while the whole time their life is testifying to a different reality and is letting them down.

[18 : 16] That they may know certain truths, but they're not living a certain life. It is an unmerited confidence. Throughout the world we find individuals who cling to religion.

They may not even completely agree with everything their religion claims to agree with. But they cling to the fact that they are of such and such religion and they are hoping in the reality of that religion while their entire time living their lives contrary to the very truths that it teaches.

It happens in Christianity and it happens throughout every other religion throughout the world.

Knowing it is part of the battle. It is an unmerited confidence and knowledge.

Paul goes on. Not only does religion leave. This is the fallacy of religion. This is the deceptiveness. Not only can religion lead to an unmerited confidence. Number two, religion leads to an undesirable confusion.

This is probably one of the most disheartening things that we find throughout the Old Testament and Paul highlights it here in the New Testament. He says right here in verse 24. After he begins to tell them that they may know the truth, they may know the things that are accurate, they may know exactly what it is that God desires of them, but their life doesn't seem to match what they claim to know.

[19 : 38] As a matter of fact, he goes on to say, you're not doing what you're telling other people to do. Sounds a whole lot like what Jesus was saying, right? You're telling people to tithe mint and cummin, but you're not even tithing your own heart. He would tell this to the religious leaders that you're being, you're a blind leading the blind.

You're trying to tell them how to live their life and the whole time you're not living your life that way. And look at what he says here in verse 24. For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you, just as it is written.

Here it is. We see that religion leads to an undesirable confusion. Paul says the most religious people group in all the world, the Jewish nation, were responsible for the blaspheming of the name of God around the world.

Now that is a hard accusation. Before we think that Paul is anti-Jewish or anti-Semitic, we need to understand that he is a Jew of the Jews, right? He is a Pharisee of the Pharisees.

When it came to legalism and religion, he embodied it more than anyone else that ever wrote the Bible. He was one of the upper class of the religious people. But praise be to God, he encountered Jesus on the way to Damascus, on the Damascus road.

[20 : 42] And all of his religion crumbled underneath his feet. And he began to see the relationship with Jesus Christ as his Lord and Savior. And here he is writing, he says, you are trying to tell people how to live their life, but your life can't even live up to what you're telling them to do.

And because of this, there is a confusion. Just as it is written, the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. Isn't that a disheartening thing?

He says, you may be the most religious people in all the world, but God's name is being mocked. God's name is being made fun of. And instead of people turning to God, they're running from God. The Jewish people, we find them in the Old Testament.

God called them. Understand this. Why did God call the Jewish nation? God called Abram out of the land of the Ur of the Chaldeans and said, from you, I will rise up a people that will be my people, right?

He delivered them from Egypt after putting them in Egypt for 430 years in this incubator of this beautiful place in the land of Goshen. And I know they were slaves. You said beautiful place. Well, you should be here on Sunday nights.

[21 : 39] We're going through that. It's a pretty cool story in the book of Exodus. God gave them this great place where they could multiply, multiply, multiply, and he hardened them through hardships. And all of a sudden, he delivered them. Tonight, we'll probably look at the parting of the Red Sea.

Pretty cool story. He takes them out in this miraculous way. Well, why did he do all that? Why? He said, because you will be a nation of priests for me. You're going to be a nation of priests. He says, as a matter of fact, I called one out and made you a multitude, some 2 million. And now I got 2 million pastors in the world who are going to show the world what I look like. I'm about to flood the world with my priests. I'm not just calling Moses. I'm not just calling Aaron. I'm not calling the tribe of Levi.

Something you see through the book of Exodus is God called the nation to be priests. The nation said, we can't do it. So he said, okay. So I'll call the Levites to be priests. And the Levites failed to do it. So they said, okay.

Then I'll call these people to be priests. It kept getting smaller and smaller and smaller because people were running away from their God-given responsibility. But the whole plan of God was, I'm going to flood the world with these people who know me so that they can show the world what I look like.

[22 : 40] This is why God chose a people for himself. But the problem is, is when they went and lived out in the world, the world saw what they looked like and didn't want anything to do with their God. And they said, I don't want that God.

By the time Jesus came, died, and rose again, the Gentiles around the world looked at the Jewish people as some of the harshest, meanest people on the face of the earth.

They looked at them as being the most discriminatory, even though throughout the Old Testament they were told to welcome the aliens and the sojourners. As a matter of fact, the Jewish nation would tell one another, don't even have anything to do with a non-Jew.

They were being so ugly. And they were becoming a hindrance to the reality of God. Again, we're not picking on the Jewish nation.

Because why has God raised up the church? Because I believe in the priests of the believers found in the book of 1 Peter, right? There's not just one pastor or one priest in the church. It is the priests of the believers.

[23 : 40] God calls you to be a part of his church so that he can flood the world with his people. He is flooding the world with his people to show the world what he looks like. And the reality is, is too often the church leads to confusion rather than clarity of what God is like.

The sad reality is that when the world looks at the church, it doesn't take long reading newspapers. It doesn't take long reading history. The sad reality is that when the world looks at the church, the world is often scratching their head saying, I don't know any more about God now from looking at the church than I did before I ever looked at the church.

And as a matter of fact, they begin to see the hatred, the animosity, the spitefulness. They begin to see the bickering and the biting and the lack of love found within the body. And the world looks at the church and says, I don't want anything to do with that.

That's what religion does. But man, when you find someone who's in love with Jesus because they know Jesus is in love with them. And you find someone who is walking in a relationship, not in a religion.

And you find a church that is not living. Friend, listen to me. I say this with all due respect. Okay? I say this with all due respect. I love the Southern Baptist. I've been a part of the Southern Baptist ever since I came to Christ.

[24 : 53] I've always pastored in the Southern Baptist church. I've preached from many pulpits, but the one I've pastored in has been the Southern Baptist. I'll preach in non-denominational. I've preached in any other place. But listen, I don't have to be Southern Baptist.

I'm not tied to denomination. My identity is not found in who the Southern Baptists are. I've said this time and time again. When the Southern Baptists deviate from the Word of God, I will deviate from the Southern Baptists. Okay? I have to be a believer in the Lord Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior.

That's all I have to be. And my identity is not tied up in the denomination. My identity is not tied up in the church name. My identity is tied up in who Christ is. And I'm not living out of a religion.

I'm living out of a relationship. And when the church begins to catch that, and the world begins to look at a church in love with the Savior, I don't care what name. There are plenty of churches changing the name of their church because they think their name is offensive.

I got news for you. The name on the sign is not what's offending the world outside. It's the people in the pews that become offensive. You can call it the old-fashioned Southern Baptist, nothing new, nothing extraordinary, no lights, war trace, Baptist church if you want to.

[26 : 04] And when the people are in love with Jesus, they will come. Because the world desperately wants to know what God is like. The world's not looking for a new finagled idea.

The world's not looking for a new and fancy. They can get that anywhere. But unfortunately, one of the problems with religion is it always leads to an undesirable, an undesirable confusion.

Paul says, as it is written. Where is that written? I'm not going to ask you to turn there, but I want you to write this down. Take Ezekiel 36 and just write it down somewhere in your notes. You need to read Ezekiel 36. Ezekiel 36 is so important anyhow because it is in Ezekiel 36 that we get that wonderful passage where God says, I will remove your heart of stone and replace it with a heart of flesh.

That's a pretty amazing thing, right? That God has softened our heart. He took out this old heart of stone and he gave us a heart of flesh. But what I want to caution you is before you get to that point, that's at the end of Ezekiel 36.

You've got to read all of Ezekiel 36 because this is where this comes from. And Paul is pointing back to the book of Ezekiel. And in Ezekiel, God says this about the nation of Israel. He said, you were supposed to show the world what I was like.

[27 : 13] Now, I'm paraphrasing, but you've got to go read it. It's amazing. He said, but you didn't. And because you didn't, I had to cast you out of your land. You have been exiled. You are now carried away into exile. Now all the world is looking at you going, God is a big God?

God can't even keep his people in Jerusalem. Look, their temple is destroyed. Their land is empty. They are so weak they couldn't even defend themselves. Who is their God? And then God says, not for you, but because of my name's sake, I'm about to do something.

God says, not because of you, not because you desire it, not because you earn it, not because you're worth it. I'm going to do something amazing. I'm going to call you out of the land of captivity, and I'm going to put you back in the land of promise.

I'm going to rebuild my temple. But God reminds them over and over again, not because of you, but because of my name, I'm going to behave. Not because of you, but because of my name. God says, you made my name ugly.

I'm about to make my name great. You made me look bad, and I'm about to show out. God says, I'm not going to do it because you're worth it. I'm not going to do it because you earned it. He said, I'm going to do it about my name, and you get the benefit of my name.

[28 : 15] And when I do something for my name's sake, I'm going to change you. I'm going to change your heart of stone, and I'm going to put in a heart of flesh. Listen, friend, when God calls you to himself, it is not about you. It's about him.

And he changes you because he calls you his own. He calls you his person. And why is he doing that? Because he wants his name to be glorified and magnified. And this is what I have found.

When I see the reality of this, God was really showing out when he saved Billy Joe Calvert. Okay, because I know who Billy Joe Calvert is. I know how hard my heart of stone was. I knew how I had this religion thing, and I looked like I was a pretty good person.

But when I was living my life Monday through Saturday, I was bringing the name of God through the mud, and I was shaming his name. I would come to church on Sunday after doing some things on Saturday I should have never done.

I was bringing ridicule to the name of God, and I was living desperately wicked in all of my sins and in all of my ways. And God says, you don't deserve it. You don't earn it. But because my name is great, I'm going to save you.

[29 : 14] And he changed my heart, and he put a soft heart within me. And all of a sudden, I can't stand up and say, man, look how religious I am. I can say, look how loved I am. Look at what he's done to me. Look at how he's changed me.

And I can say, you know what? I made his name ugly, but praise be to God through me, he's making his name great friendless. And religion always leads to confusion. And when we think we

can work it out in our own strength, in our own power, the world's going to scratch their heads and go, I don't know about this God.

But when they encounter us as we have been changed by the love of God, then they'll say, wow, maybe this God wants me. Number three, and I'll be through.

Not only does religion produce unmerited confidence, not only does religion lead to undesirable confusion, religion points to one unavoidable conclusion. Religion points to one unavoidable conclusion.

This is this passage, you know, there are some passages, I read them, and I kind of look at them and go, wow. And I read this passage starting in verse 25 through 29, and I think, could Paul have said the word circumcision any more times than what he did when he wrote this, right?

[30 : 22] But again, know what circumcision is. Circumcision was a sign of the covenant for the Jewish nation. It was their seal. Like, I told you I was religious. I've been circumcised. Okay, that's what they say. I'm a religious person.

Well, show me your religion. Okay, I've been circumcised. That's how religious I am. I'd be just like in today's time. Well, how religious are you? I've been baptized. I went through the water. I did something. That's how religious I am. Man, I got wet when nobody else in the church wet.

But me, that's how religious I am. This is exactly what circumcision was to the Jewish people. Look at what it says. He says, for indeed circumcision is a value if. Oh, those two-letter words are so hard, aren't they?

If. If you practice the law. He says, not that you've had something done to you. It's what you're doing because of what has been done to you. Circumcision is a value if you practice the law. But if you are a transgressor of the law, and we can all go, amen, that's us. We've done that, right? Paul says, every one of us have transgressed. Then your circumcision has become uncircumcision. So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?

[31 : 24] And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the law, will he not judge you, who though having the letter of the law and circumcision are a transgressor of the law? For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor a circumcision that which is outward in the flesh.

What is he saying? Here's the unavoidable conclusion to religion. It doesn't matter what you do. It only matters what you show. It only matters the testimony of your life.

I mean, I'll be honest with you. I have met individuals. I don't normally go around. I've told you this. I don't wear shirts. I have pastor across the back. I don't have a sticker on my vehicle that says clergy. Many of you have seen my vehicle.

I actually have a penguin on the back of my vehicle. It's a pretty cool story about that. I'll tell you that sometime. Youngstown State, okay? So I have this like mighty penguin on the back of my vehicle. So everybody's like, there's no way this guy's a pastor.

Why has he got a chrome penguin on the back window? I don't say clergy. I don't introduce myself as, hey, I'm the pastor. I'm Billy Joe, right? Because I've found people that the moment they accept your pastor, the whole demeanor changes.

[32 : 24] And everything about them gets different. I have found people who could tell me the date they joined the church. They could tell me when they were baptized. They could tell me all these things. And then I have found people who aren't necessarily. They attend church.

They're there. They love the Lord. Their life looks all messed up. They have all kinds of problems. They have all kinds of struggles. But they are living more true to the gospel than the person over here with all the dates memorized.

They can point to their circumcision. And these people over here, they go, I don't know. But I know what. My life's different than what it used to be. And I have all these issues. And these people over here, they can point to the dates.

They can point to the circumcision. But they can't point to anything after the circumcision, right? Because think about circumcision. When I was eight days old, I was circumcised. So that means I'm okay, right? I mean, that's exactly what the Jewish people were relying upon.

Something that happened at eight days old. And they were literally going back to, when I was eight, my parents had me circumcised. So I know I'm okay. I'm like this super religious guy. Because before I even knew how to say anything, before I knew right and wrong, before I ever made a decision, my parents made a decision for me.

[33 : 24] And that means I have to be okay. And then you meet people and say, you know what, I made a lot of decisions. I made a lot of mistakes. I failed a lot. I messed up a lot. But God has saved me. He's changed me. And I don't know if I got it all right.

I don't know if I've done everything in the right order. But you know what? Something's different. And all of a sudden, you begin to see the difference between a religion and a relationship. And that's exactly what Paul is saying here. He said, you're saying you're circumcised, but your life doesn't look like that of a circumcised individual.

These people over here, they've never had the surgery done. But man, their life looks amazing. And Paul says, now tell me, which one is right? Is it just because you've kept the letter of the law that you're right?

Or is it because the intent of the law is lived out in your life that makes you right? And then Paul takes it a step further and says, really, circumcision has nothing to do with the flesh. Now, to the religious person, this smacks him in the face.

He says, it's the circumcision of the heart, which is done by the spirit. And now there's a play on words here that we miss in English, but I want you to see it. For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor in circumcision that which is outward of the flesh.

[34 : 27] Okay, the word Jew comes from the word Judah, a line from the tribe of Judah. You know, Judah is an amazing tribe throughout the Old Testament. You read the Old Testament. Judah is always the largest tribe. It's always the first tribe in March array when it goes out.

It is a tribe that is always the first one to camp beside the tabernacle. Judah is a pretty powerful place. It has a place of prominence that matters because Jesus came from the tribe of Judah. Okay, we see that throughout Scripture. But Judah led to the name Jew. That's how we call the people the Jewish nation is because of Judah. The word Judah literally, in its literal translation, means praise.

Okay, it means praise. So, he is not a Jew or he is not a Judah or he is not a praise because of the flesh. Because look at what verse 29 says.

But he is a Jew or a Judah or a praise who is one inwardly. And circumcision is that which is of the heart by the spirit, not by the letter.

[35 : 22] And his praise or Judah or Jewishness is not from men, but from God. What is Paul saying? You are not the people of God because you were born into a certain people group.

You are a people of God because by the spirit of God he has changed you and he has called you to himself. You are not a praise because of who your parents are.

You are a praise because of who God is. And we see this. That the unavoidable conclusion of religion is this. I cannot be what God calls me to be on my own.

He must do something to me that I cannot do on my own. And he must do something in my heart.

And he must change me. And he must call me to myself.

Friend, listen to me. The fallacy of religion is this. It deceives us into thinking we're okay. And we're not picking on a nation here.

[36 : 22] We're just using that nation as a reflection of ourselves. Religion deceives us into thinking we're okay because we're doing something.

But the relationship of Christ calls us to be what we could never be on our own. Through the work of the spirit on the heart of the believer. And we are his praise or his Judah or his Jew because of something he's done to us.

Not because of something we've done for him. Would you pray with me? Lord, I thank you so much for this day. God, I pray that our hope, our confidence, and our comfort will be found in your work and yours alone.

We thank you for who you say we are. We thank you for the way you speak truth into our lives. But Lord, we realize that those truths come to us not because of something we have earned. But because of your grace and your mercy and your forgiveness.

God, we ask that you would help us to move past these things that would take our eyes off of you. And Lord, help us to focus on you and you alone. And we ask it all in Jesus' name. Amen. Amen.

[37 : 56] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.
[40 : 56] Thank you.

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.

[43 : 26] Thank you.

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.
[45 : 56] Thank you.

Thank you.