

**Religious People's Only Hope**  
**2021-11-21**

Romans 2:17-29

*17 But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God 18 and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; 19 and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—*

*21 you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. 24 For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."*

*25 For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision. 26 So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.*

*28 For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical. 29 But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.*

Most difficult to reach are religious – don't see the need for a Savior, view self as pretty good.

- spiritually deluded, comfortable, secure. unbelievers with false assurance.
  - The Gospel is the only hope for religious people.

Religious people falsely believe their heritage/community gives favor with God.

- Jews felt justified before God because of whose they were....descendants of Abraham
  - Today: Christian parents, part of gospel-centered community.

Religious feel secure because of their knowledge of Word...especially "teachers".

Jews felt secure because possessed, knew, proclaimed/taught Law. Romans 2:17-20

- rabbis said— studying law equal to keeping law.
- Why you read/study Word? Have to, puff up or obey/delight in Jesus Christ?

Jews knew Law but hearts were far from God...did not practice what they taught.

Romans 2:21-24, Mk 7:6

- true wisdom: do what you know to be true, not just to know.
- If sharp contrast between theology and practice, doctrine and life - dishonors God and part of the reason lost blaspheme Him.

- obey not to be blessed but to honor God, grow in grace, be light in the dark.
  - Christian may be the only “Bible” most people ever read.

Religious deluded that sacraments/ordinances justify them before God. Romans 2:25-28

- 500 years before the Law....God-ordained circumcision to represented/remind Jews of God’s covenant with Abraham and his descendants. Genesis 17:9-14, Romans 11:17–25 Deuteronomy 36:6
  - symbolized moral purity/separation from world, faith commitment to God.
    - Rabbi Rabin "Circumcision saves us from hell." Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6, Jeremiah 4:4
- Today: believe baptism, communion, other rituals save. Matthew 12:7
  - God desires obedience from heart instead of sacrament/ordinance 1 Samuel 15:22
    - Can’t obey outwardly without the Holy Spirit’s inner heart circumcision!
      - The Gospel is the only hope for religious people.

Letter of Law in heritage, know Word, ordinances only have value when accompanied by the Spirit of Law. Romans 2:29, 2 Corinthians 3:6, Galatians 6:15

- letter = law minus Holy Spirit; external religious activities that result in death.
  - letter kills because it demands perfect obedience for salvation but not the power to do.
- Spirit imparts life and changes our hearts producing fruit of obedience.
  - Holy Spirit: circumcises heart to love Jesus; writes law on our heart; indwells to empower to JOYFULLY obey Law. Gospel

May not be religious unbeliever but many Christians live life like religious people.

- Try to obey/keep Law in own strength, focus on externals over internals

Gospel is the only hope for “religious” Christians because it empowers us to obey the truth we know.

- Preach Gospel to self: salvation not based on our performance but what Jesus did for us.
  - God’s favor today is secure in Jesus Christ not my religious activities.
- Outward obedience is the external fruit of internal hearts circumcised by Holy Spirit and free to pursue/receive God’s praise not man’s.