

### Intro:

We've been talking about the Religious Man in the book of Romans. What is Paul's message to the Religious Man?

- He can't escape judgement just because he has religion, even the *right religion*.

Men seem to have a perverse sense of what 'religion' will do for them.

Have you ever heard of Jesse James?

- Born in 1847
- At age of 15, joined Quantrill's Raiders, an outlaw band. On Sept 20, 1864, "Jesse is credited for killing union major A.V. Johnson, when unarmed Union soldiers were taken from a train and murdered"<sup>1</sup>
- With his brother, he formed another outlaw band in 1866. They robbed a bank on Feb 13, 1866, killing a man during the robbery.
- Other robberies and murders followed.
- In 1868, James was baptized in the Kearney Baptist Church.
- Then he killed another man, a bank cashier, and joined the church choir and taught hymn-singing.<sup>2</sup>
- He went on in his evil career, staying ahead of the law, until he was killed by one of his own men.

What do you think of Jesse James and his religion? Did his baptism count for anything? Did his choir singing?

Jesse James is the man of our verse last Sunday, Rm 2.25.

Here's another man, a pastor whom the IRS investigated.

- Seems he had claimed a deduction for the price of his 'clerical collar' [the little white band that some ministers wear to symbolize that they are 'slaves of Christ']
- He claimed \$450 for it.
- When he was questioned about it he said... "Oops, I must have misplaced the decimal – it was only \$4.50."
- So he paid the tax, plus 6% interest, and everybody was happy...

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<sup>1</sup> <http://ladybelleoutlaw.homestead.com/JesseJames.html> (Accessed 11.18.08)

<sup>2</sup> "Jesse James' Hypocrisy", Fredericksburg Bible Illustrator Supplements

- Except one auditor.
- He started looking back in the pastor's previous returns.
- This pastor seemed to have *a lot* of problems with his decimals! For three years things that were \$4.50 or so came out as \$450 in his deduction column.<sup>3</sup>

Now, what good did that white collar do that preacher?

He's another Rm 2.25 man!

Now, what do you think of these men? Do you think you are better than them?

Why?

You see, that is the point we have been working on – we're all *at least* Rm 2.25 men. And women. And boys and girls. And teenagers. (Did I get everybody?)

Our apostle Paul here is teaching us that we are all sinners and all under the condemnation of God in our natural condition.

Now we are going to progress on to another development of this same point.

Read Rm 2.25-29, text vv. 25-27

**Proposition:** The righteousness of pagans condemns the unrighteousness of religious people.

## I. The hypothetical Gentile (26)

The first point here is to establish who Paul is talking about:
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- A. He is not talking about an uncircumcised man as a man who is *saved* by keeping the Law
  1. We know by other passages that no one is saved by deeds (3.20, 28)
  2. We had a similar example earlier in the chapter — where Paul shows that it is possible to be *moral* without the Law (2.14) [This example is not saved by his morality either.]
  3. What Paul is doing here is creating a hypothetical example
    - a. Greek construction called a third class condition
    - b. Some conditional statements *assume* the condition is true, or view it as if it were true for sake of argument

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<sup>3</sup> Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations: Signs of the Times*, p. 561, #2261

- c. This condition is a more remote possibility – “Suppose someone did so and so...”

NAS translates the beginning of the verse this way, “So, if the uncircumcised man...” — bringing out the hypothetical nature of the condition more.

- B. Paul has established a point in v. 25 that he is emphasizing with his hypothetical example in v. 26

1. The argument of v. 25

- a. There is a value to circumcision [to the right rite and the right religion] if you practice the law
- b. If you break the law, your circumcision is the same as uncircumcision: Sin invalidates the rite
- c. It seems that the religious Jew would concede that point

You yourselves have validated the point in the introduction to the message:

- You don't think much of Jesse James' religion, do you?
- You don't think much of the tax-dodging pastor's religious collar, do you?

2. The argument of v. 26 considers the same principle but from a different direction

- a. All right, he says, if sin invalidates circumcision, then righteousness is equivalent in value to circumcision
- b. More than that: the righteous deeds of a Gentile are as good as if a man is circumcised, aren't they?

A Jew of the first century would be very unwilling to concede this point, but they would have to concede the logic.

- 1) If practicing lawlessness invalidates circumcision
- 2) Then practicing righteousness validates uncircumcision

But we all know Gentiles are going to hell!!!

This puts the religious man in a bind – he is in the same state as a Gentile... as a pagan, a barbarian

## II. The deluded Jew [Religious Man]

Points to remember:

- A. The religious man thinks his participation in religion has made him righteous before God
  - 1. He has the right religion (Bible-based)
  - 2. He has the right rites (God-ordained)
- B. The rites of right religion are things that are external in themselves
  - 1. In this case, OT religion and circumcision
  - 2. The rite of circumcision is sort of a 'shorthand' that stands for the whole religion
    - a. Circumcision = Judaism
    - b. Baptism = Christianity
    - c. Going forward = Christianity
    - d. Praying the right prayer = Christianity
  - 3. The rationale of the right rites is this: *if one has the externals, he de facto has the internals* (he thinks)
- C. The rite is a public religious distinction [something that marks him out as different from the unrighteous world]
  - 1. Circumcision did mark the Jews
  - 2. Baptism does mark Christians
  - 3. As does church attendance; public confession, etc.

Remember also, we are making the point that the right religion and the right rites are not enough to escape God's condemnation of sin.

A Roman priest in Mexico gets it "The church is always full on Sunday," he said. "Rituals are easy for the people. But they do not turn to the church when they are making choices in their lives. And if they do turn to the church, many of them reject what the church demands." — Paolo César Barajas, Mexican Catholic Priest on the moral condition of the average Mexican Catholic<sup>4</sup>

<sup>4</sup> Ginger Thompson, "On Mexico Visit, Pope Will Find Divided Catholic Country", New York Times, 7/30/02

But unfortunately, he only partly gets it: notice that he still is thinking in terms of religion and doing — “what the church demands”

Jews who depended on the right rites were deluded;  
Christians who depend on their rites are also deluded.

### III. The condemnation of the hypocrite (27)

- A. This verse continues the hypothetical situation posed in v. 26
1. The hypothetical is a Law-keeping uncircumcised [Gentile/pagan] man
  2. The extension of the hypothetical is in the form of a rhetorical question
- B. The Question in its essence: won't our hypothetical Gentile judge you?
1. The 'you' points to the Religious Man
    - a. In the context, it is the Jew
    - b. Today, it is the 'Christian' who is depending on religion for standing with God
  2. The Religious Man has all the trappings of religion
- Note: the word 'by' [“who **by** the letter and circumcision” KJV] is better translated *with* or *having*...
- So: “who **with** the letter and circumcision...” or “who **having** the letter and circumcision...”
- a. He has the letter: *i.e.*, the Scriptures and their attendant blessings (see Rm 2.17-20)
  - b. He has the right rite: circumcision
  - c. But he is a transgressor of the law: a law breaker
3. The Law-keeping uncircumcised man will judge the law-breaking circumcised man
- C. Jesus taught us how this is done (Mt 12.41-42, Lk 11.31-32)
1. Men of Nineveh: how did they keep the Law – repented at preaching of Jonah
    - a. Their righteous repentance condemns the unrighteous lives of those Jews who refuse the Messiah

- b. Their righteous repentance speaks today and condemns you if you are merely depending on Christianity as a religion
  2. Queen of Sheba: how did she keep the Law – glorified God at the wisdom of Solomon and the grace of God in his life
    - a. Her righteous testimony condemns the unrighteous lives of those Jews who refuse the Messiah
    - b. Her righteous testimony speaks today and condemns you if you are merely depending on Christianity as a religion
- D. When and how does the uncircumcised Law-keeper judge the circumcised Law-breaker?
  1. Some commentators make this exclusively future, at the last judgement

And indeed those who are depending on religion will be judged by the righteousness of unbelievers — the religionist should have known better.

2. But the verb is present tense: The uncircumcised Law-keeper *is judging* the circumcised Law-breaker
      3. The judgement is right now, in the here and now

Take the case of Jimmy Swaggart – flamboyant televangelist, caught somehow mixed up with prostitutes...

- There are many unsaved, ungodly people who don't ever get mixed up with prostitutes in any way
- Their righteousness in that matter condemns the unrighteousness of the preacher who should have known better

- E. Having the letter (*i.e.*, the written Law) and having Circumcision (*i.e.*, the Right Rite) are therefore no guarantors of immunity against judgement

## Conclusion:

The religious man finds himself invalidating any value his religious rites may have by his unrighteousness (last week's message)

The religious man finds himself condemned, not by God, but by the righteous deeds of his unreligious neighbour (who still has to stand before God in judgement himself).

Written anonymously on the walls of a medieval castle were the following words:

You call me Master ... and Obey me not.  
You call me Light ... and See me not.  
You call me Way ... and Walk me not.  
You call me Life ... and Desire me not.  
You call me Wise ... and Follow me not.  
You call me Fair ... and Love me not.  
You call me Rich ... and Ask me not.  
You call me Eternal ... and Seek me not.  
You call me Gracious ... and Trust me not.  
If I condemn you, Blame me not.<sup>5</sup>

The point is: all men have sinned and are under judgement — pagan, moral, and religious men — all are under judgement.

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<sup>5</sup> Unknown — quoted by Bailey Smith, *Real Evangelism*, p. 138.