



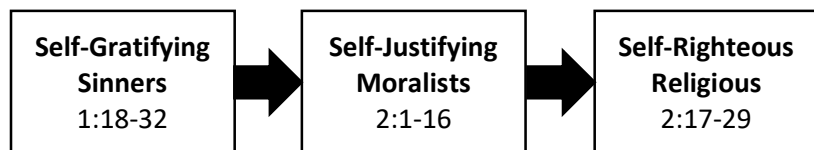
Romans 2:17-29

THE CONDEMNATION OF THE RELIGIOUS

Nothing is more deadly than self-righteousness! The man who counts himself to be righteous by his own works, worships himself. Practically, the object of his adoration is his own dear, delectable, excellent self; all his confidence is in himself, his boasting is in himself. O wretched egotist, you do at once lie and blaspheme! Self-righteousness is born in the house of folly, and it is nursed by human fancy. Cease from doting upon your own fancied beauties and worshiping your own foolish image. Self-righteousness is a great, God defying sin. Soul poverty and destitution bring a man to God. Self-righteousness is the ruin of all who harbor it. ...This weed of self-righteousness will grow on any dunghill. No heap of rubbish is too rotten for the accursed toadstool of proud self to grow upon. Among those who profess to be religious, self-righteousness very frequently comes in, because they have not truly received the religion of Jesus Christ. If they were true believers they would be humble and contrite, for self-righteousness and faith in Christ are diametrically opposed. He who is saved by grace finds no room for boasting in himself. A sinner washed in Jesus' blood and clothed in Jesus' righteousness, boasts only in the Lord. He is done once for all with that which glories in self. Self-righteousness is detestable in his sight. His cry is "God forbid that I should boast save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ."

—Charles H. Spurgeon (1834-92)

In Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul progressively advances his argument that all people—from the self-gratifying sinner to the self-righteous religious—are sinners in need of God's grace.



TWO PRELIMINARY STATEMENTS REGARDING 2:17-29:

1. Paul confronts Judaism because he was a _____.
2. Theologically he confronts all _____.

THE DANGERS OF RELIGION:

1. A FALSE _____ (2:17-18).

In their name

In their privileges

In their knowledge

Having spent considerable time with good [religious] people, I can understand why Jesus liked to be with tax collectors and sinners. —Mark Twain

Religion is comparable to a childhood neurosis. —Sigmund Freud

Religion is man-made. ...Religion poisons everything. —Christopher Hitchens

We would probably not be far from the mark if we were to conclude that Paul's interlocutor is Paul himself—the unconverted Pharisee, expressing attitudes Paul remembered so well as having been his own! —James D. G. Dunn

They wore the name Jew as a badge of great honor and pride. The root meaning of Judah, and therefore of Jew, is "praised," and the Jews of Paul's day considered that to be a well-deserved title and description of themselves. —John MacArthur, Jr.

2. A FALSE _____ (2:19-20).

They puffed up themselves (cf. Hosea 5:5; 1 Cor. 8:1b).

They looked down on others (cf. Luke 18:9-14).

3. A FALSE _____ (2:21-22).

They failed to see their own sin.

- Money
- Sexuality
- Idolatry

They failed to see the seriousness of their sin (cf. Ezek. 36:20).

4. A FALSE _____ TO SIN (2:25-27)

They elevated external ritual over obedience from the heart.

God elevates heart obedience over external ritual (cf. Acts 10).

The Meaning of Circumcision:

1. A sign of the Abrahamic Covenant—God’s promise of descendants, including the Seed who would bless the world (Gen. 17:1-11; 22:18).
2. A picture of the need for cleansing, the “cutting away” of that which hinders effectiveness or fruitfulness (Lev. 19:23; Ex. 6:12; Jer. 6:10).
3. A call to the circumcision of the heart (Deut. 10:16; 30:6; Jer. 4:4).

WHAT IS THE ANTITHESIS OF SELF-RIGHTEOUS RELIGION?

R _____ with God through an _____ change of the _____ in the power of the _____ which seeks God’s praise above the praise and approval of men.

Why are you here today? Why do you do what you do?

There is no doubt that many Jews felt they were immune from God’s judgment. He would never send a Jew to hell, they thought. The Gentiles, on the other hand, were fuel for the flames of hell.

—William MacDonald

In the age to come Abraham will sit at the gate of Gehenna [hell], and he will not permit a circumcised Israelite to go down there.

—Rabbi Levi (3rd century)

It is possible that some Jews, though not worshiping idols themselves, would take them from temples and sell them. ...A more likely explanation is that the term “robbing temples” is figurative. Paul is taking a radical approach to the Ten Commandments, just as Jesus did (Matt. 5:21-48). True religion is about the heart motives as much as (or more than) about the actions of the body.

—Timothy Keller

For the Jews, circumcision was the symbol by which they were admonished that whatever comes forth from man’s seed, that is, the whole nature of mankind, is corrupt and needs pruning.

—John Calvin (1509-64)

As you read your Bible day by day, do you apply the truth to yourself? What is your motive when you read the Bible? Is it just to have knowledge of it so you can show others how much you know, and argue with them, or are you applying the truth to yourselves? ...As you read say to yourself, “This is me! What is it saying about me?” Allow the Scripture to search you, otherwise it can be very dangerous.

—D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones