

Romans 2

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[0 : 00] As recorded in Matthew's Gospel, chapter 7, at verse 21, the Lord Jesus said the following. Not everyone who says to me, Lord, Lord, will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.

Many will say to me on that day, Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?

Then I will tell them plainly, I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers. The Lord Jesus is saying that one day, countless members will stand before the great white throne, disbelieving that they are really there at all.

In other words, earnest, sincere, apparently religious people will be lost eternally. That's what scripture says. That's what Jesus himself says.

Why is this the case? Well, basically it's the case because people who appear to be religious, who know the truth, who know about the Lord Jesus, all these things, are lulled into a false religious security, which has stopped them getting to the heart of the great matter of sin and salvation.

[1 : 44] And that's what Paul is talking about in Romans chapter 2. And in verses 17 to 29 of Romans chapter 2, Paul, well, these verses, if you like, are the antidote to such deception.

Paul warns apparently religious people, perhaps like some of us here today, that they must guard against that sort of false religious confidence.

In the Apostle Paul in verses 17 to 29 of Romans chapter 2, that's what we're talking about, I think that's the youth fellowship coming in, or the Bible class, rather.

Romans chapter 2, verses 17 to 29. Paul points out two main dangers relating to misplaced religious confidence.

First thing he draws attention to is the danger of thinking we're safe because we possess the truth. The second thing he points to is the danger of thinking we're acceptable to God because we're affiliated with his people.

[2 : 58] That's what he's saying. The Jews, by and large, thought they were safe, thought they were on the way to eternal life and blessedness because they possessed the truth, because they possessed God's law.

The word of God. And secondly, that they were acceptable to God because they were Jews. That was all they thought they needed. So let's look then, this morning, at these two things.

First thing Paul's hope that we have to guard about is this. We must beware of overconfidence because of having the truth. That's verses 17 to 24 of Romans 2.

Now that was the great danger for religiously minded Jews in biblical times, thinking they were acceptable to God and they were on the way to heaven because they had the truth.

As I was saying to the young people, to the Sunday school children, every single Jew realized how great his privileges were. Above all the other peoples of the earth, they were the people who were people of privilege.

[4 : 08] Paul describes that in verses 17 to 18. Now you, if you call yourself a Jew, if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God, if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law.

That's what Paul is saying there. And I want to suggest that really, in Paul's time at any rate, there were six different aspects to Jewish self-confidence because they had the truth.

The first aspect of their self-confidence and their overconfidence was that they actually were called Jews. The word Jew basically means praise to Jehovah, praise to the Lord God.

And they were fond of calling themselves so-and-so Jew. It's like as if I would sign my name, John McIntosh, Jew. That's how proud they were of the fact of what they were actually called.

They were called by God's name. And why did they like that? Secondly, they relied on the possession of the law. They felt that their special status came from simply possessing the law of God.

[5 : 21] Not from living by it. They were people who, many of them, view the law of God inside out. But they didn't live by it.

They didn't live by it. It's like as if we were constantly being found with our Bibles in our hands, reading the Bible daily, never doing a single thing about what it's said to do.

They thought that they had God's law. That was all that was necessary. And they boasted in God. They bragged about God because they perceived themselves to be God's favours.

See how it mounts up, can't you? Fourthly, they prided themselves on knowing his revealed will. The Ten Commandments and all the rest.

Fifth thing, I think, that apparently is the case. They prided themselves that they discerned the things that were really essential. They were able to make superior moral judges.

[6 : 33] On the other hand, these Gentiles, they didn't have a clue. But they had God's law and that enabled them to make the right judgments. How above the Gentiles they were.

As I said to the young people, habitually they called the Gentiles dogs. Gentile dogs. Sometimes they didn't even put the word Gentile in front of them.

It crept even within the Jewish nation themselves. As you think about the Pharisee, remember, at the top of the temple steps, looking down at the poor tax collector, the publican at the bottom, who didn't dare come up the steps.

So conscious was he of his sin, and he beat his breast, and he cries, God be merciful, look at me a sinner. Pharisees at the top saying, I do this, I do that, I thank you Lord, that I'm not like that, even like that poor tax collector down there at the bottom.

They thought they could make the right moral judgments and discernments about everything. And they said, we are instructed by the law, that's the sixth thing I would identify.

[7 : 37] The law was a light to their feet, they said, a light for their path. Therefore, of course, in view of all these things, they were acceptable to God.

that the sword that went right to the heart of these right religious Jews, also goes right, I would suggest, to our hearts as well.

This delusion that they had, coming from their privileged position as they saw it, it led to the deadly pride of arrogant presumption.

And that's what Paul talks about. in verses 19 to 20. If you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, you have become so arrogant, and you presume so much.

And it led to these Jews, seeing themselves, as Paul says, as guides, as lights, as collectors, as teachers, as teachers, they were looking down with condescension and scorn on everybody else.

[8 : 55] And everybody else saw it. The Gentiles saw it. The Romans and the Greeks saw it. The Roman historian, pacifists, do you know what he said?

He says this, among themselves, among themselves, their honesty is inflexible, their compassion quick to move, but to all other persons, they show the hatred of antagonism.

It's alleged, it's not absolutely verifiable, to be truthful, but it was alleged, that in Alexandria, second city of the Roman Empire, the Jews allegedly took a note, never to show kindness to any Gentile.

So, in other words, the privileges that should have led, should have produced, should have produced saints, produced instead arrogant, loveless, self-centred priests.

That's not the way it should be. Now, the thing is, that this can happen to those who have the Gospel too. This can happen to those who have the Gospel too.

[10 : 05] That's why the Lord Jesus told the parable of the Pharisee and the public. Jesus said there, before he commenced to tell the story, to some who were confident of their own righteousness and looked down on everyone else, Jesus told the parable of the Pharisee and the public.

I think that means we must draw a conclusion to those of us who would see ourselves as Christians. Whenever a follower of Christ feels superior, beware.

Whenever a follower of Christ feels superior, beware, because such an attitude is not a sign of grace. As soon as any of you, as soon as I myself feel myself superior to somebody else, certainly

superior to a fellow believer, then we need to beware.

To come into a position of spiritual privilege, and let's face it, we are all in a position of spiritual privilege, only to surrender to self-righteous arrogance, indicates that one's soul is in danger. Familiarity with holy things must not give way to spiritual presumption. And then in verses 21-23, Paul asks penetrating but healing questions.

[11 : 29] You then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?

You who have all idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? He aims to humble his hearers because the questions are asked in such a way as demand agreement.

So Paul is trying to do away with their false security. The Jews in Rome that he was writing to were not okay because their lives did not measure up to the truth they possessed.

And that's the first fundamental question I want to pose for us all today. Do our lives, does my life measure up to the truth I possess?

Do your lives measure up to the truth you possess? Everyone who knows the scriptures, knows about the great truth of salvation through faith, from the Lord Jesus Christ, who knows about everything that he said and did, as probably the vast majority of us here today do.

[12 : 51] Does your life measure up to that? Does my life measure up to that? I think we're called on really to be ruthless with ourselves here and assess ourselves and decide whether, in fact, our lives do measure up today or not.

And you know, can I suggest also we should be very, very careful about doing that and then saying, yeah, I measure up. One of the most spiritually dangerous things you can do is to be satisfied with the way you are spiritually.

the Christian who is satisfied with where they are spiritually is a Christian who is not making the sort of progress and growth and grace and knowledge and understanding of the Lord Jesus that they should be.

You know, one of the most frightening things I've ever experienced is talking to a person, woman, and I was quite encouraged by her and in the course of the conversation with her she said to me, I'm quite satisfied with where I am spiritually and I was encouraging her to get more involved in the life of the congregation and that woman fell away.

If any of you here today are saying if you're in a house I'm happy with the way I am spiritually then be careful. one of the marks of the Christian is that they are growing in their understanding in their knowledge in their fellowship with the Lord Jesus Christ and with his people.

[14 : 35] And can I say perhaps if there are any of you here I don't know you well enough to know if there is anybody here in this position or not but if there are any of you here who are trusting in the Lord Jesus you're a converted person but you haven't made a profession of faith can I encourage you to do that because people who are secret Christians very rarely are they growing Christians.

It's very difficult to grow spiritually if you don't actually identify yourself openly publicly with Christ's people.

Very difficult. So he pray about this and he is working to get them to acknowledge that their lives aren't measuring up to their knowledge of the truth.

Then he ends up in verse 24 as it is written God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. This burst of accusation goes back to what Nathan the prophet said to David after he committed adultery with Bathsheba and then engineered the death in battle of Bathsheba's husband.

2 Samuel 12 verse 14 Nathan says to David by doing this you have made the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme or perhaps we might say you've made the enemies of the Lord show utter contempt.

[16 : 06] God's people have to be very careful not to lead those who are not God's people to have contempt for the Saviour and to have contempt for the Lord himself because of what our actions are.

So Paul says God is not impressed by claims to orthodoxy neither is the world neither are the Gentiles. What does impress God and what does impress the world as well is an orthodoxy which produces a new life.

The people in the streets outside who have no knowledge personally of the Lord Jesus Christ should be able to see Christ's people and see that there's something different about them.

Is that the sort of life that you're leading? Whatever situation it is God is impressed by right belief in action.

So the first thing Paul says to the Jews there in Rome and to ourselves as well to beware of overconfidence because we know the truth. Second thing he says in verse 25 to 27 we deal with it in verse 25 to 27 he says beware of what we would call false security in association.

[17 : 32] In other words we must beware of thinking we are right with God because we are affiliated with his people in some sort of way or other. Now the Jews at the time of Paul at the time of the Lord Jesus basically thought that if they were circumcised as far as the men were concerned if they were circumcised there was no way they were going to be in hell.

In fact one of the early rabbis a man named Rabbi Menachem said our rabbis have said that no circumcised man will see hell.

Romans chapter 4 if you read on at verse 11 Paul says that he goes to correct that misapprehension by saying that Abraham received the sign of circumcision as a public demonstration or a public testimony of his commitment to God.

All his life was committed to God and circumcision was meant to signify that to demonstrate it among his descendants. But in verse 24 here Paul says that circumcision alone will not justify a man before God.

Circumcision was of great value undoubtedly if one understood and lived its intended significance but if a Jew disregarded the meaning of baptism it was meaningless.

[19 : 03] Now can I suggest that what we need to do here is to transpose the word baptism for circumcision. There are countless hundreds countless thousands in our land who have been baptized but haven't even begun to fulfill their baptismal commitments.

Circumcision wasn't going to save a Jew neither will baptism save anybody today. I know it's the case that not that many people perhaps comparatively in our society are baptized these days but there are certainly many who know the gospel occasionally go to church perhaps regularly go to church but they haven't really implemented those vows that were taken when they were baptized. If you're sitting here today you were baptized and you've never made a profession of faith you've never been converted your baptism will not do anything for you.

Paul then turns to the other side of the coin in verses 26 to 27 If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised?

The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who even though you have the written code and circumcision are a lawbreaker. He's not exactly saying that uncircumcised Gentiles can keep the law but he is saying that if they do they will be reckoned as circumcised.

[20 : 59] And what Paul is doing well one of the greatest Jewish insults that could be given was to call a Jew an uncircumcised one.

That's what Paul's doing. He's saying to the Jews who were hearing this who weren't keeping the law as they were supposed to he's saying you're as if you were an uncircumcised one.

Circumcision alone doesn't justify a man. His actions must be consistent with what he says he believes. Church affiliation, denominational connection, baptism, none of these will save a person. They won't convince God. they're all outward circumcisions. As I was saying to the young people about the people in the place where I used to be a minister years ago, they seem to think that if they had some sort of connection with the free church they would be alright.

But God would welcome them into heaven. And it's just not the case. don't think that you'll be in heaven because you've got some sort of connection with God's people.

[22 : 26] And then in the last two verses of the chapter Paul explains what is necessary. And he says that assurance of your salvation or confidence about your salvation it lies in a right heart.

A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly. And circumcision is circumcision of the heart by the spirit, not by the written code.

Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God. And the family people who put them in the corner and they ask about their salvation they will say yes, I think I tried to keep the Ten Commandments.

They'll say yes, I go to church regularly perhaps. They might even say I'm always in church. And they're actually relying on what they do, not what they are.

It's easy to be deceived by our familiarity with the truth, and with our religious affiliations or connections. But God is never fooled.

[23 : 48] Truth is that earnest, confident, apparently religious people will ultimately be lost. They will be told, depart from me, I never knew you.

Truth is that being right with God is a matter of heart as for circumcision. And that's not something that came with Christ.

That's something that was there and stated even in the time of Moses. Moses, Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse 6, said this, And the Lord your God will circumcise your hearts and the heart of your descendants to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live.

The prophet Jeremiah, chapter 4, verse 4, circumcise yourselves to the Lord, circumcise your hearts.

And you know, the New Testament also describes the true believer in terms of what we might call, or what it calls inner circumcision.

[25 : 06] Paul's letter to the Colossians, chapter 2, verses 9 to 11. In Christ, all the fullness of the deity lives in bodily form, and you have been given fullness in Christ who is the head over every power and authority.

In him you were also circumcised in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with the circumcision done by the hands of men, but with the circumcision done by Christ.

That's what Paul says. And we therefore all have to ask ourselves, this question. Where does my confidence lie?

Does it rest on our knowledge of God's word? Or is it resting on our religious connections? The fact that we go to church.

The fact that our parents were believers, or our grandparents. parents. If it rests on anything like this, we are deluded.

[26 : 26] Because true salvation is a matter of the heart. Later on in Romans, Romans chapter 10, verse 9, Paul says this, that if you confess with your mouth Jesus is Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.

With the heart one believes, resulting in righteousness, and you're justified. with your mouth, you confess, result your sins, resulting in salvation, and you're saved.

That's what Paul is saying here. And it is a message to very many people, I think, I fear, sitting in churches up and down the land.

They think they're safe, because they know about Jesus. they think they're safe, because they're connected with God's people in some sort of way.

But there's nothing really in their hearts. Their knowledge and their connections haven't made a difference in their lives.

[27 : 53] Now, can I just ask one question in conclusion? question. Is anything I said that today troubled any of you?

Is your heart troubled? Well, if it is, there's hope for you. If you're sitting here and you haven't put your trust in the Lord Jesus, you haven't experienced the change of life that comes with confession of sin and turning to the Lord Jesus, and you're concerned about it, then that is the most encouraging sign there can be.

If there's anyone here today, you've heard all this, and your faith isn't in Jesus, and you're not bothered, then you're standing into danger. That's what Paul says.

That's what the Lord Jesus himself said, when he said there'll be people arriving at the judgment seat, thinking they're safe, and being sent to help.

Remember John Bunyan and his children's progress? As that young man, his name I keep forgetting, it's really bad, he gets to the gates of heaven, and he's turned away.

[29 : 15] And Bunyan says in those really solemn and memorable words, and I saw that there was a way to hell from the very gates of heaven.

The people who are on that road, who will be on that road, are those who have misplaced religious confidence, the sort of misplaced religious confidence that Paul's talking about here.

I pray, surely all of us, that God will not let any of us or any of those we love be in that position.

That's a question. ■■■ ■ Wilson■■■ brethren Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

[32 : 00] Thank you. Let us conclude then and sing in Psalm 62. Then sing psalms. And it's on page 80.

Psalm 62. And we'll sing from verse 9. The tune will be Herongate. The lowborn man is but a breath.

The highborn man is but a lie. Raid in a balance side by side, they come to nothing but a sigh. Do not seek after wealth by force or triumph in ill-gotten gain.

Even though your goods increase, set not your heart on what is vain. My God has spoken. I have heard that you are strong and loving, Lord.

Each one according to his deeds you will assuredly reward. Those verses, Psalm 62, verse 9. The lowborn man is but a breath. The highborn man is but a lie.

[33 : 00] We'll start to sing. The lowborn man is but a way.

The highborn man is but a lie. The highborn man is but a lie. Within the lowborn man is but a lie.

The highborn man is but a lie. The highborn man is but a lie.

The highborn man is but a lie. The highborn man is but a lie. The highborn man is but a lie. The highborn man is but a lie.

The lowborn man is but a lie. to lower all the blood of the Father.

[34 : 25] My God has opened the problems by the Lord.

My God has opened the eye and the important part is God theiense of the Lord the próximo thecere ■■ the the now may the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, the love of God the Father, the fellowship and communion of the Holy Spirit be with you all now and always. Amen. Amen. Amen.