



## Scotts Hill Baptist Church

ROMANS • GOD'S JUDGMENT ON THE RELIGIOUS • ROMANS 2 • 10/1/2023

### MAIN POINT

Whether we consider ourselves religious and moral or not, we are all in desperate need of a Savior.

### INTRODUCTION

As your group time begins, use this section to introduce the topic of discussion.

**Think back to when you were a child. What's the best or most creative excuse you ever used with someone in authority to avoid taking responsibility for something you had done wrong?**

**Do you think we are still prone to use excuses today as adults? Why?**

**What does our propensity to make excuses for ourselves reveal about the way we truly see ourselves?**

The news is bad. In Romans 1, Paul made the argument that there is enough apparent about God in nature to condemn. Even people who have never read the Bible or heard a sermon preached know enough to know that God is the Creator they have sinned against. But as he opened chapter 2, he turned his attention to any of the rest of us who might think we are exempt from God's judgment because of our religious activity or morality. But as with the rest of humanity, chapter 2 shows us that those who rely on their religious performance and works of morality are as lost as those who are self-admittedly far from God.

### UNDERSTANDING

Unpack the biblical text to discover what the Scripture says or means about a particular topic.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 2:17-29.

**What are some things you were taught regarding Christianity when you were a kid?**

**Rather than believing you were "always a Christian" when did you come to know Jesus? What is your testimony!?**

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 2:17-24.

**What were the people Paul addressed in these verses trusting in?**

**Do you have the tendency to trust in your own religious performance? Why do you think that pull is so strong?**

**Why does it matter so much that we practice what we preach? Why is it not enough to say, "do as I say, not as I do"?**

**How does 1 Corinthians 9:27 fit in line with the teaching of these verses?**

**How might doing so result in the name of God being blasphemed among non-believers (v. 24)?**

We are constantly tempted to trust in all kinds of other things instead of Jesus. If we're not careful, we can easily drift into believing that we are righteous on our own accord before God. If we do, then we show we believe we don't truly need a Savior. Instead of openly admitting our need, we prop ourselves up on the sins of others as we compare ourselves to them. True transformation only comes when we recognize our true need for a Savior.

| HAVE A VOLUNTEER READ ROMANS 2:24-29.

**How does trusting in your own acts of righteousness actually dishonor the sacrifice of Jesus?**

**How do we fight the difference between a spiritual discipline and a spiritual checklist?**

## APPLICATION

Help your group identify how the truths from the Scripture passage apply directly to their lives.

**What is one thing other than Jesus you are tempted to put your trust in?**

**What is a healthy way you can remind yourself of your need for a Savior this week?**

**Out of Pastor Phil's list, which area of rituals and ceremonies do you find most tempting to rely on?**

## PRAYER

Close in a time of prayer, acknowledging your need for a Savior. Ask for God's forgiveness if you have been trusting in your own righteousness instead of the sacrifice of Jesus. Ask the Lord to make your heart soft instead of judgmental toward other people.

## COMMENTARY

### | ROMANS 2:17-29

2:17-20. The positive side of the Jewish ledger was strong. Paul lists eight advantages to being a Jew—eight “boasts” by which they thought God’s judgment of them would not be as harsh as the Gentiles: They were the Jews! They were God’s chosen people, his only chosen people, the “apple of his eye” (Zech. 2:8). This must count for something! They rely on the law. Had God chosen any other people to reveal his will to at Sinai? Their religious reverence for the law betrayed the hope they put in their possession of it. They brag about their relationship to God. Different from idols of wood and stone, Israel’s God was their Father (see Isa. 63:16; Mic. 3:11). They know his will. Israel could, it is true, say that they knew the will of God. They were the only ones with special revelation from him (Ex. 4:22). They approve of what is superior. Dietary laws, lifestyle restrictions, worship instructions—the Jews had a narrower view of life than their neighbors; a view they deemed superior (see Gal. 1:14). They are instructed by the law. Psalm 119 extols the merits of God’s decrees as those which direct the steps of man. The Jews relished God’s instructions (so much so that they made up hundreds of decrees to go along with his, eventually preferring theirs over his; see Matt. 23). They are convinced they are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of infants. Indeed, they were called by God to be such to the nations of the world (Isa. 42:6; 49:6). They have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth (see Ps. 19:7–9).

It is understandable, while not excusable, how Israel could be tempted to think of themselves as better than the rest of humanity. In terms of privilege and possession, they

did have a chosen place. In terms of practice, however, they failed as frequently as the Gentiles. In that fact is found the Jewish liabilities.

2:21-24. Jewish liabilities can be outlined as cleanly as their assets by just imagining the opposites. That is, the behavior their privileged position should have produced was not how they lived. Paul calls them to account for the discrepancy.

The upshot of their behavior was the most terrible of results: God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you. While not a direct quote, Paul builds this statement on two references (see Isa. 52:5; Ezek. 36:22) from the most terrible period in Israel's history, the exile and captivity of her people. The name of God that was so holy to the Jews that they would not even pronounce it was being dragged through the dirty streets of the pagan world like a bad joke. "All day long my name is constantly blasphemed," the Lord said through Isaiah (52:5). Three different times, Ezekiel recounts, God had not judged Israel when they came out of Egypt to keep his name from being profaned in the eyes of the nation (see Ezek. 20:9,14, 22).

2:25-27. Paul now reveals in the simplest of terms the true profit in being a Jew: observe the law. But if you have been physically circumcised, yet fail to keep the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. So critical is the observance of the law that the Gentiles (those not circumcised physically) who [obey] the law will condemn the Jews who, though circumcised physically, are lawbreakers! True spiritual profit, in God's eyes, is found in obedience to him.

2:28-29. A true Jew cannot be determined by line of sight—it is not a matter of externalities. A man is a Jew if he is one inwardly. Four things, Paul says, will allow us to recognize a true Jew in God's sight: He does not emphasize outward and external signs (v. 28). His heart has been circumcised (revealed before God) (v. 29). The Spirit's knife ("the word of God"; Heb. 4:12) has performed the circumcision on the heart (v. 29). God's praise drowns out the "praise" of men (v. 29). Continuing the diatribe format which he began in 2:1, Paul now moves to raise and answer the objections which he knew would flow from his Jewish readers in Rome. After all, he has just dismantled the superstructure of Jewish religion—in the name of the gospel.