

Romans 2:4-29

False Security

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Verses 17-20, tell us some of the characteristics of religious people. **But if you bear the name Jew and rely upon the law, and boast in God, and know his will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed of the law**--i.e. you know the Bible--"**you're confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge of the truth.**" He gives us some of the characteristics of religious people. First of all, religious people rely many times on their affiliations to "save" them. It's one of the signs of a religious person. They rely on their affiliation. You say '*Oh I'm a Methodist! I'm a Presbyterian, I'm a Mormom, I'm an Adventist*'--No, that's not what I asked. There's a sort of a mentality in the religious mind of salvation by brand name, you know. I have had people ask me quite often, "*Mark, people at work are asking me 'What are you?' What do I tell them?*" I say, "Tell them you're a Jesus person." [One good way of doing it would be "*I'm a **Christian** who just happens to attend a 'Calvary Chapel', or 'a Baptist church' or 'a Methodist church', etc., etc., you get the idea-Christian 1st, affiliation 2nd. God doesn't look for your affiliation, he looks to see if the Holy Spirit is indwelling you, whether you are a real born-again Christian. If that's what is most important to God, why do you insist on putting your affiliation ahead of what God thinks is important--"*I'm a good Baptist*"--yeah, but are you a good Christian?--that's what God cares about.] Because they ask me, '*Are you a Baptist?*' '*No.*' '*Are you a Lutheran?*' '*No.*' '*Are you a Catholic?*' '*No.*' '*Well, what are you!?*' '*I'm a Christian!*' Tell 'em you go to the generic church, everything is yellow and black. Just tell them you're a Jesus person. You see, they've got the*

religious mentality too, don't they? And you've got to cut through that and say 'I'm a Jesus person. Everything in my life is wrapped around Jesus Christ.' For me to live is Christ, he is my life. He's the one I'm expecting to return, he's the one who saved me, he's the one who loves me, he's the one who accepts me--I'm a Jesus person. Tell them that. It'll knock them over, they won't know what to do with you. They won't know where to pigeon-hole you. 'Yeah, but are you going to heaven? Well, aren't all Catholics going to heaven?' [and on it goes].

For The Religious Person It's All About Knowledge & External Behavior

Secondly, a religious person, people, are often in danger of relying on their knowledge and external behavior to save them. To religious people outward appearance is very important to them. They couldn't worship in anything but a church-looking building for one thing. For years we were so blessed, we didn't get religious people. They wouldn't come to this *school* where we were meeting. We didn't have *pews*. We didn't have *Hymnals*. We didn't have *stained glass windows* and *chandeliers* hanging down, you know. We didn't have them. And people would walk in and say "*This is a church?*" And they'd leave, and I was, 'Praise God!' I'm sorry, ha, ha, I was so glad when they left. They have to have an atmosphere, external things are so important to them [things that amount to the re-arrangement of the deck chairs on the Titanic], how people look, how people dress, they can be very critical of everybody else, especially those who don't meet *their* standards.

They're Into Rituals & Ceremonies

Another characteristic that you see, you know, he picks on Jews there, but they just represent the religious person [in this passage]. Religious people are also in spiritual danger, they have a false security based on a reliance on rituals and ceremonies to save them. In Paul's day the ceremony of circumcision was looked upon almost superstitiously. The rabbis of his day thought that "no circumcised Jewish male will see hell", end quote. Another rabbi said (quote) "circumcision saves us from hell" (end quote). The Midrash includes this statement (quote) "God swore to Abraham that no one who was circumcised would be sent to hell. Abraham sits before the gate of hell and never allows any circumcised Israelite to enter" (end quote). I've sort of heard the same thing from people who think you've got to be baptized to be saved, or "confirmed" or go through the temple ceremony, or wear "holy underwear", or pass out literature (gospel tracts), or be a vegetarian. I mean, I've heard this same thing, I mean, religion is religion is religion. I really believe that if you're a religious person you could be a good Muslim, a good Mormon, it doesn't matter, religion is religion. ***And Christianity stands starkly apart from all of it, because Christianity does not believe that any ritual or ceremony, even a Christian ritual or a Christian ceremony has any salvation power in it. There is no rite or ordinance that you can partake of that will save you. Jesus saves, and only Jesus saves.*** 'But I was baptized!' So what. Do you know the Lord? 'Well, I was confirmed.' But are you born-again? [i.e. Does God's Holy Spirit dwell inside you?] 'Well, I'm a church member.' Do you know Jesus Christ as your personal savior? You see, when you get to heaven [into the Kingdom of heaven as a resurrected immortal being, cf. 1 Cor 15:49-54,-- heaven will end up on earth, cf. Rev. 21:1-17] God is not going to ask "Were you baptized?", "Were you confirmed?",

"Were you a church member?--Let's see your giving record." He's not going to say any of that. He's going to say **"What did you do with my Son Jesus?"** That's going to be the answer that's going to get you in or out. 'What have you done with Jesus?' That's what matters. Too many people today are relying on some ritual or ceremony that they went through to save them. But the Lord says something different, look at **Jeremiah chapter 9**, beginning with **verse 25**, the Jews trusted in this rite of circumcision. Some trust, *"Oh, I've had Holy Communion"*, *"Oh, I've been baptized."* There's no difference. See the religious mentality, it's a false security that you have. **"Behold days are coming, declares the Lord, that I will punish all who are circumcised and yet"-what?-"uncircumcised; Egypt, and Judah, and Edom, and the children of Ammon, and Moab, and all that are in the utmost corners, that dwell in the wilderness: for all these nations are uncircumcised, all the house of Israel, are uncircumcised in the heart."** [cf. Deuteronomy 10:16, **"Circumcise therefore the foreskin of your heart, and be no more stiffnecked."** Deuteronomy 30:6, **"And the Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, that thou mayest live."** I.e. Physical circumcision was merely a symbol for a far deeper spiritual act that must be fulfilled in the hearts of all believers. The physical symbol counts for nothing without the spiritual counterpart being fulfilled.] God says ***"Oh yeah, you've gone thorough the outward ritual, but your heart isn't with me."*** You can stuff bread in your mouth and drink the wine and your heart isn't with me." And you can do that week after week after week. I never forget my next-door neighbor growing up, he got married, they had to have a Catholic wedding with a High Mass, they had to have it. He never went to church, ever. But this was an essential, man, if the marriage is going to work, we've got to have the right hockus, pockus pronounced over it, you know. And there he was at the altar, so drunk he could hardly stand, laughing and

giggling, partaking of the bread, just so sickening. 'Oh, but we went through the ritual.' Well why don't you wear garlich around your neck too? You'd better wear crosses too, to protect yourself. You'd better wear something to protect you from the 'evil eye' too, you know. I mean, don't walk under ladders, and if a cat runs in front of you--be careful! Superstition is all it amounts to, 'Oh we'd better get this baby baptized!' (God forbid we kind of give God his due every once in awhile, Easter & Christmas, we do try to make it to church if nothing better comes up.) 'But this baby better be baptized!' Superstition, hockus pockus is all it amounts to. You see, you could read it this way, "But behold days are coming, declares the Lord, that I will punish all who are baptized and yet not baptized--all who take Holy Communion and yet don't take Holy Communion, all who are church members, but they're not church members." [You see, God sees who has the Holy Spirit dwelling within them and who doesn't, God sees who is being actively led by the Holy Spirit (cf. Romans 8:9,14--read it) and who isn't.] You see, heaven's rolls and earth's rolls, heaven's computer printout and earth's computer printout are two different things. And are you sure? Are you the religious Christian? Oh, I just love to hear about Christians shooting each other in [northern] Ireland, don't you?--blowing each other to bits. 'See you in heaven!--Boom!' 'Oh but they're "Christians"' 'They were Christians fighting there in Lebanon'--till they all got wiped out, fighting the Muslims. Oh, just like Jesus, isn't it?--didn't he say 'Blow your enemies to bits?--Do it to them before they do it to you?' Just like Jesus, right? You see, there are a lot of "religious" people in the world. Religion is religion, you can call it anything you want, but it's religion, and it won't get you to heaven [i.e. into God's Kingdom, as an immortal being, cf. 1 Cor 15]. Relationship is what gets you to heaven. Not ritual, not religion--relationship. Not ceremony, but the Savior. And what have you done with Jesus [Yeshua]? Is he your Redeemer?--then the ritual means something. But if he's not, you're lost. You're a lost 'religious' person. Light your candles, say your

prayers, it'll do you no good, because you must be born again. We're not saved by what **we** do, we are saved by what **he did** for us. We're not saved by what is **done to us, we're saved by what he did for us.** "My hope is built on nothing else than Jesus' blood and righteousness. I dare not trust the sweetest frame, but wholly lean on Jesus name, on Christ the solid Rock I stand, all other ground is sinking sand." Maybe it dawned on you today that you're a 'religious' person. If you've been trusting in your 'baptism', if you've been trusting in your 'confirmation' or 'church attendance', if you've been trusting your 'knowledge of the Bible' or 'Bible teachings', if you've been trusting in **anything** in addition to or other than Jesus Christ, throw it out now. [And we're not talking about Godly obedience to the Word of God brought about by the enablement of God's indwelling Holy Spirit--he does not mean that.] And trust in Christ alone. And let him begin a work in your life that will be unbelievable. You won't need a building anymore because you have the body of Christ. You won't need the ritual because you have the Redeemer, you have the Savior--puts meaning in the Sacrament." [transcript of a connective expository sermon given by J. Mark Martin of Calvary Community Church, P.O. Box 39607, Phoenix, AZ 85069]

[Now I wish to put verses 17-29 of Romans 2 into the original context of the audience they were written to--*the Jewish believers in Yeshua who were attending the Church of God in Rome.* This Roman congregation of the early apostolic Church of God was composed of two major ethnic groups, Jewish believers--Torah observant Jewish believers--and Gentile Roman believers. Now read these same verses, understanding that these Torah observant Jewish believers were trying to be "teachers" of the Law to their Gentile brother members in this same congregation, and Paul was critiquing their teaching style, words without substance. They had the knowledge of the Law all their

lives, and were now trying to teach it to the Gentile believers while not obeying it themselves! They were putting more emphasis on the rituals of the Old Testament Law of Moses than on having a relationship with Jesus Christ (Yeshua Meschiach). Paul was showing them that while they were busy teaching the Law of God, they were not really obeying it--or how real obedience is brought about in a believer--by first seeking to have an active living relationship with Jesus of Nazareth--then true heartfelt Holy Spirit enabled obedience would follow. Relationship first, then Jesus inside believers brings about true godly obedience to the Law of Christ. So now let's read what Paul said to the Jewish believers in the apostolic Church of God meeting in Rome. Now to **Romans 2:17-29**, **"Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, and knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; and art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonorest thou God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written. For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Therefore if the uncircumcision keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? And shall not uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfil the law, judge thee, who by the letter and circumcision dost transgress the law? For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly: neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: but he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose**

praise is not of men, but of God."

And realize this, there are Messianic Jewish-Christian congregations all across America, and now spreading around the world. There are over 90 active Messianic Jewish-Christian congregations in the nation of Israel. So keeping the customs of the Law of Moses as part of the gospel, if that is your ethnic background, is not forbidden by the new covenant law of Christ. Jewish believers are free to do that, as long as they put their relationship with Jesus, Yeshua of Nazareth, first and foremost, seeking Yeshua-Holy Spirit-enabled obedience through faith. Then the Old Testament rituals, Holy Days and Sabbath are perfectly OK, and have tremendous meaning for the believer [see <https://UNITYINCHRIST.COM/lamb/holyday.htm>]--just as Holy Communion and baptism have for Gentile Christians. These Jewish believers just had the ritualistic '*cart before the horse*', putting more emphasis on the Old Testament, Law of Moses rituals than on a direct relationship with Christ. When you get to Romans 14 you'll see Paul's strong advice about the rights these Messianic Jews had to keep observing their Law of Moses customs, and that they also were covered by the blood of Yeshua. Now today a tremendous revival of Messianic Jewish believers in Yeshua has arisen, and most of them are non-Torah observant believers who follow the Torah customs, including Sabbath and Holy Day observance, out of ethnic preference, which is allowed by the legislation Paul cut in Romans 14 (mirrored in Acts 15), verses 5-6, 22-23. To read more about this amazing revival of the late 20th and early 21st century, log onto <https://UNITYINCHRIST.COM/messianicmovement/messianicmovement.htm>.

The gospel of salvation, as God inspired the apostles to write down (Acts 15 and Romans 14), was designed by God to be adaptive to whatever race or ethnic group it would

encounter. It was originally adapted to the Jewish race and ethnic group, Judaism. The first churches were Messianic Jewish, and appeared to be so Jewish, ethnic Mosaic customs and all, that it was considered by the temple leaders of the time to be an offshoot sect of Judaism, and was actually called by these same temple leaders *the sect of the Nazarenes*. This branch of Jewish Christians, whose Headquarters church was the Church of God in Jerusalem, was estimated to be as large as 50,000 members. Other Messianic congregations were scattered throughout Asia Minor, keeping Sabbath and Holy Days, and a New Testament Passover service once a year (under John, Polycarp and Policrates). As you got more into the pagan Gentile parts of the Roman empire and away from these Messianic Jewish congregations, Paul centered his advice and writings more on Gentile practices and issues than Jewish. But in Paul's writings, only two branches of Christianity are ever mentioned, the Gentile and the Jewish. Now we see that this same Jewish branch of Christianity is making a comeback-it is being brought back into existence by the direct calling of God the Father through the Holy Spirit. To read more about this amazing ongoing event log onto the link titled: Two Branches of Christianity, Jewish and Gentile. You will find this information fascinating. (<http://www.UNITYINCHRIST.COM/messianicmovement/twobranches.htm>)]

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