

SERMON NOTES

SERIES: Romans: God's Power Salvation

TITLE: The Problem with Religion

SCRIPTURE: Romans 2:17-29

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The book of Romans is a masterfully written exposition of the gospel of God. Without a doubt, it is the foundation of authentic Christianity and the most articulate, systematic understanding of our faith found in the Bible. Countless lives have been changed by the truth found in this ancient letter, and it continues to change lives today. Interestingly enough, Romans was written to Christians. So, while the good news found in Romans can certainly bring people to faith in Jesus, the actual focus is on how the gospel helps Christians think rightly about God, life, faith, and Christian community. If you want to grow to know God more personal and intimate way, this letter is for you!

The Gospel that saves us, changes us. The Gospel that changes us, unites us.

Trying to be good enough to go to heaven when you die is like trying to swim to Hawaii. To be sure, some people can swim farther than other people, but if the goal is Hawaii, nobody will make it—we would all come up short and die in the waves. Jesus himself sets the bar of reaching God so high that we all fall short. He said, "You must be perfect even as your father in heaven is perfect" (Matt 5:48). His half-brother, the apostle James, put it this way, "For whoever keeps the whole law and yet fails at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it" (James 2:10). And that's what Paul is saying in Romans 2—Paul is echoing Jesus' teaching by highlighting for us *the problem with religion*. And, there are three main problems with religion that we see in this chapter.

1. Religion can make you feel morally _____ to other people (2:17-20).

2. Religion can _____ you into thinking that your sin is not as bad as other people's sin (2:21-24).

3. Religion can never give you a _____ heart (2:25-29).

For Discussion ...

1. Have someone read through Romans 2:17-29. How does this passage fit in with what Paul has said so far in chapters 1-2? What is his main point in this section of Romans?
2. What was the main problem with these good, law-abiding, religious Jews?
3. How can religion make people feel that they're morally superior to other people? ...When have you seen this problem in yourself?
4. How can religion make people feel that their sin is not as bad as other people's sin? ...When have you seen this problem in yourself? ...When are you most tempted to forget this?
5. How does the Sermon on the Mount help us understand this passage?
6. Why is it easy to think we get a pass on our heart sins/idols, but God is going to really stick it to people who break his behavioral commandments?
7. What did circumcision mean to the Jewish people and how does it apply today? How does Colossians 2:11 help us see that our hope is in God circumcising our hearts?