

sermon study guide

Sermon Summary (see next page for discussion questions)

“Romans” Part 6: The Danger of Trusting in Religion

November 20/21, 2021

Dr. Henry Schorr

In Chapter 2 of Romans, Paul mentions three categories of people: rebellious, respectable and religious. Using the Jewish faith as an illustration, Paul teaches that focusing on the ‘religious’ aspects of our faith can be deceptive.

He says many Jews forgot that God chose them to be channels through which the world would know Him, so they focused on themselves, adhering to religious symbols, rituals and traditions. They believed that being Jewish, circumcised, studying the Scriptures, teaching their children/others, and knowing God’s will, was their passport to heaven.

Christians are not immune from falling into this way of thinking, putting our trust in religious tradition, religious knowledge, rituals or symbols.

The reality is when we stand before Almighty God we will stand alone and we will be judged on the basis of the state of our heart. We won’t be able to appeal to how Biblical and Christ-glorifying the church that we were a member of is. Nor will we be able to appeal to the righteousness of our parents or grandparents. We won’t be able to point to the Bible knowledge we have accumulated, or religious rituals/symbols we have participated in. It’s not enough just to know the Scriptures and even to teach the Scriptures.

Paul’s concern in Romans 2:17-29 is that it is possible for us to substitute a genuine and growing friendship with Jesus with religious works and activities, thinking this will please Him and assure us of eternal life in heaven. But it won’t! (Matthew 7:21-23)

Religious works, activities, and rituals should flow out of a true, living faith from within a person’s heart. This is a living faith: those who put their trust in Christ alone and in knowing Him more and walking with Him more closely each day. People with a living faith are attractive in their humility, their love, grace and gentleness

Pastor Henry provided an illustration explaining how God intends our faith and works to function together: Imagine a woman who married a man named Law. Law had so many demands and expectations that even though she tried her best it was never enough. She could never satisfy Law. One day Law died she fell in love and married a man named Grace. Grace treated her kindly and with love. Over time, she was transformed deep down. She felt so loved and accepted, she *wanted to* love her husband back in the same way, and wanted to do things that pleased him, not because she *had to* but because she loved him.

God is abundant in love, steadfast in mercy, and we’re saved by grace through belief in our Savior Jesus Christ. God wanted us to freely choose to know Him, love Him, trust Him and follow Him, not merely follow the Law. We need a living faith, and should treat those who are struggling with compassion. If we don’t practice what we preach, we blaspheme God’s name, and this turns unbelievers away from Christ.

Jesus tells us: ‘I love you! You mean the world to me. I want to have a heart level friendship with you, walking and talking with you all day long, and empowering you to do, what you can’t do, to make a difference in the lives of others. I don’t want you to be paralyzed by fear and doubt; I want you to know me so that you can trust me with your life, the direction I give you in this life, and your eternity.’ Jesus invites us to trust Him, step out and taste and see that He is good!

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Discussion Questions

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IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. Share why a certain religious symbol, ritual, or tradition is deeply meaningful to you.
2. Before you came to Christ were you rebellious, respectable or religious? Explain.

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Romans 2:17-29

3. How can a person practice church traditions, symbols and service, read and study the Bible, and still miss God?

Read Hebrews 4:12, Matthew 7:21-23, Romans 2:28-29, Isaiah 29:13a

4. What roles do head, heart, and action play in a loving relationship with God? How can ritual, symbol and tradition enhance this?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

5. Consider the illustration of Law and Grace that Pastor Henry told. In your relationship with God, is He more the Gracious loving God, or is He the Lawyer God? In what ways do you behave toward others as a Lawyer? As a Grace-giver?
6. How would you rate this past year regarding your relationship with God? In what ways did you grow closer to the grace of God and see His fruit growing in you? In what ways did you struggle in your relationship with God and others? Pray to encourage one another to be ‘all in’ with God.

For Personal Reflection/Prayer:

Is there an aspect of your faith that has become an empty ritual? What must you do to make it a matter of the heart?

THE WORD (NIV)

Romans 2:17-29

17 Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; 18 if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; 19 if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, 20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— 21 you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? 22 You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? 23 You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? 24 As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.” 25 Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. 26 So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? 27 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.

28 A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. 29 No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.

Hebrews 4:12

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart.

Matthew 7:21-23

Isaiah 29:13a