

Religious but Lost

Text: Romans 2:1-5

Introduction:

1. The Apostle Paul now turns his attention from the heathen Gentiles to the self-righteous Jew. He probes below the outward veneer of righteousness to demonstrate that they are equally as guilty before God as the heathen Gentiles.
2. The Jew occupied a privileged position, being in possession of the Scriptures (3:1-2). But with this privilege came dangerous assumption that they would receive preferential treatment from God at the judgment.
3. Note shift in tenses from third person to second – ‘thou’, “O man”
4. The religious man in this passage represents all those who trust in their works (self-effort) to make themselves righteous before God.

I. Self-Condensation (Vs. 1-2)

A. Hypocritical Judgment (1)

1. ‘judgest’ – habit of standing in judgment over others for their sins in a self-righteous manner. Note word ‘judgest’ occurs 3 times in this verse in the present tense
2. ‘inexcusable’ = same word as “without excuse” in 1:20. Means without an apology or defense. Like the Gentiles, the Jew had sinned against the knowledge he had been given by God.
3. ‘doest’ = practice the same things (refer list in Vs. 29-32) Even “moral people” so called commit many of these (e.g. pride, arrogance, slander). Many ‘religious’ people veil the most degraded acts of sin below a religious façade. Refer also Vs. 17-24
4. Christ’s condemnation of the Pharisees: Matthew 23:25-28
(25) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, **hypocrites!** for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but **within** they are full of extortion and excess.
(26) *Thou* blind Pharisee, cleanse first that *which is* within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.
(27) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead *men’s* bones, and of all uncleanness.
(28) Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of **hypocrisy** and **iniquity**.

B. Divine Judgment (2)

1. ‘but’ = contrast to the false judgment of the previous verse
2. “according to truth” = God’s judgment is absolutely just and right. It is according to the facts.

The Gospel of God – Romans Series

II. Self-Delusion (Vs. 3-4)

The Apostle poses two searching, penetrating questions to wake the self-righteous professor out of his spiritual slumber and expose his false assumptions.

A. A Complacent Mind (Vs. 3)

1. 'thinkest' = reveals a mindset and attitude of heart. Word means to reckon, consider or suppose. It implies a process of reasoning (Wuest). The English word is 'logic'
2. 'escape' = the false concept is that one will somehow be exempt from what God will justly pour out upon others. Speaks of a false sense of security about one's own standing before God.
3. Illustration: A child who has grown up in a Christian home, never experienced true conversion, yet has a false sense of safety that they are in God's favor.
4. John 3:36 *"He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but **the wrath of God abideth on him.**"*
5. Illustration: The Jews tried to establish their own righteousness (Romans 10:1-10)
6. Paul's testimony: Righteousness by faith (Phil. 3:4-9)

B. A Careless Mind (Vs. 4)

1. 'despiset' = to think down upon; to think lightly about; to look down one's nose at a thing. This is a natural consequence of the complacency of the previous verse.
2. 'goodness' = God's kindness towards sinful man. This is manifested in the following two words, 'forbearance' (suspense of wrath) and 'longsuffering' (signifies the extent of God's forbearance, an extreme degree of patience)
3. 2 Peter 3:9 *"The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; **but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance.**"*
4. "not knowing" = ignorance!
5. 'repentance' = right-about face, a change of mind and attitude (RWP). True repentance **results** in a change of life. God's purpose in his kindness is not to excuse sin but to stimulate repentance (Moo)

III. Self-Destruction (Vs. 5)

A. The Condition of the heart (5a)

1. 'hardness' = obstinate, stubborn. From 'skleros' meaning hard or stiff. The term is often employed by Moses to express the obstinacy of Pharaoh. It is in this sense that Ezekiel attributes to man a heart

The Gospel of God – Romans Series

of stone – a heart that does not feel, and which nothing in man himself can soften. (Haldane)

2. 'impenitent' = an unrepentant heart. 'impenitent' includes the concept of hardness of heart

B. The Consequences in judgment (5b)

1. "treasure up" = to lay up in store (as treasure), to heap up. The idea is gradual accumulation. Usually this word is used in a positive sense. Here it is used in a shocking and startling way. The treasure being stored away is God's wrath! Same word is translated elsewhere as follows:
 - a. Matthew 6:20 "...**lay up** for yourselves treasures in heaven..."
 - b. James 5:3 "**Ye have heaped treasure together** for the last days..."
 - c. Ecclesiastes 8:11 "*Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil.*"
2. 'against' = the word 'in'. Wrath is being accumulated and for that day.
3. 'revelation' = means unveiling. It is the word 'apocalypse' which is the title of the last Book of the Bible, Revelation.
4. 'deeds' = works. Revelation 20:11-15 "*And I saw a great white throne...*"

Conclusion: Are YOU religions but lost? Are you saved?

Illustration: In August 1969, in Pass Christian, Mississippi, a group of people were preparing to have a "hurricane party" in the face of a storm named Camille. Were they ignorant of the dangers? Could they have been overconfident? Did they let their egos and pride influence their decision? We will never know.

What we do know is that the wind was howling outside the posh Richelieu Apartments when Police Chief Jerry Peralta pulled up sometime after dark. Facing the Beach less than 250 feet from the surf, the apartments were directly in the line of danger. A man with a drink in his hand came out to the second-floor balcony and waved. Peralta yelled up, "You all need to clear out of here as quickly as you can. The storm's getting worse." But as other joined the man on the balcony, they just laughed at Peralta's order to leave. "This is my land," one of them yelled back. "If you want me off, you'll have to arrest me."

Peralta didn't arrest anyone, but he wasn't able to persuade them to leave either. He wrote down the names of the next of kin of the twenty or so people who gathered there to party through the storm. They laughed as he took their names. They had been warned, but they had no intention of leaving.

The Gospel of God – Romans Series

It was 10:15 p.m. when the front wall of the storm came ashore. Scientists clocked Camille's wind speed at more than 205 miles-per-hour (330 kms), the strongest on record. Raindrops hit with the force of bullets, and waves off the Gulf Coast crested between twenty-two (6.7m) and twenty-eight feet (8.5m) high (roughly 2-3 storeys).

News reports later showed that the worst damage came at the little settlement of motels, go-go bars, and gambling houses known as Pass Christian, Mississippi, where some twenty people were killed at a hurricane party in the Richelieu Apartments. Nothing was left of that three-story structure but the foundation; the only survivor was a five-year-old boy found clinging to a mattress the following day.

Illustration: A young woman, who had been brought up in a Christian home and who had often had very serious convictions in regard to the importance of coming to Christ, chose instead to take the way of the world. Much against the wishes of her godly mother, she insisted on keeping company with a wild, hilarious crowd, who lived only for the passing moment and tried to forget the things of eternity. Again and again she was pleaded with to turn to Christ, but she persistently refused to heed the admonitions addressed to her.

Finally, she was taken with a very serious illness. All that medical science could do for her was done in order to bring about her recovery, but it soon became evident that the case was hopeless and death was staring her in the face. Still she was hard and obdurate when urged to turn to God in repentance and take the lost sinner's place and trust the lost sinner's Saviour.

One night she awoke suddenly out of a sound sleep, a frightened look in her eyes, and asked excitedly, "Mother, what is Ezekiel 7:8,9?"

Her mother said, "What do you mean, my dear?"

She replied that she had had a most vivid dream. She thought there was a Presence in the room, who very solemnly said to her, "Read Ezekiel 7:8,9." Not recalling the verses in question, the mother reached for a Bible. As she opened it, her heart sank as she saw the words, but she read them aloud to the dying girl:

"Now I will shortly pour out my fury upon thee, and accomplish mine anger upon thee: and I will judge thee according to thy ways, and will recompense thee for all thine abominations. And mine eye shall not spare, neither will I have pity: I will recompense thee according to thy ways and thine abominations that are in the midst of thee; and ye shall know that I am the Lord that smiteth."

The poor sufferer, with a look of horror on her face, sank back on the pillow, utterly exhausted, and in a few moments she was in eternity. Once more it had been demonstrated that grace rejected brings judgment at last. (H.A. Ironside)