

Paul's Letter to the Romans:

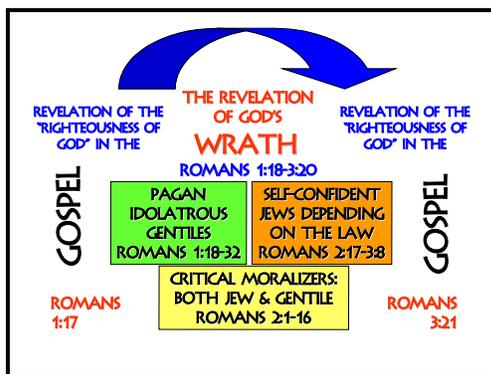


THE PINNACLE OF
CHRISTIAN THOUGHT

Let All the Poisons That Lurk in the Mud...Pt. 4, Yes, even the Jews...

Romans 2:17-3:1

So far in Romans, Paul has been building a case that all people everywhere really do need the **“righteousness of God”** that God has so graciously revealed and provided in the gospel. Now, so far Paul hasn't described in any sort of detail what that righteousness looks like or even how it is obtained but he certainly has made it plain that the world needs a righteousness, a righteousness of a completely different sort than what it currently possesses.¹

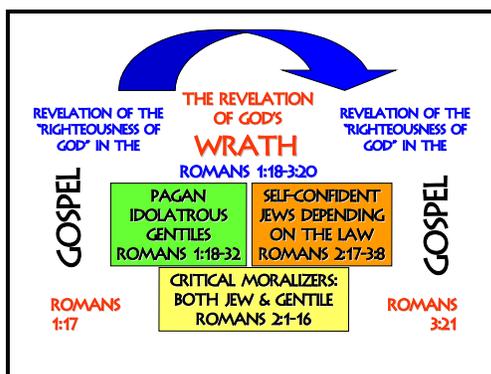


Now the first thing Paul explained to us, and we saw this now a few weeks ago, was that the pagan Gentiles certainly had no righteousness of their own. We saw how in an expression of extraordinary rebellion and unbelief the pagan Gentiles suppressed the knowledge of God that He had given to them in creation and in

nature. We also saw how in their idolatrous mockery of God they not only suppressed the truth of God but also exchanged the truth of God for images of things that God Himself had created. They committed this awful sin choosing rather to honor things created by God than God Himself. We saw, of course, that God did not let their act of rebellion go unpunished. In fact, He gave the pagan Gentiles over to their own folly to be consumed by sinful lusts. They degraded the image of God so God degraded them by giving them over to the fulfillment of their own sinful lusts.

But brothers and sisters or forebearers didn't stop there.

No, they went further. They not only exchanged the image of God for something inferior, they went so far as to offer up their much deserved worship to images created with their own hands and then in one final expression of contempt for God they denied his existence all together. You will remember, I hope, God's punishment for their sin. He gave the pagan Gentiles over to the grossest forms of sexual perversion and degradation and to depraved and insane thinking.



It was then Paul turned to the second plank of his argument. It was then he turned to address those men and women who prided themselves on possessing a

higher moral standard than the run of the mill pagan Gentile. I referred to them as **“high-minded moralists.”** We looked at Paul’s word toward them last week in Romans 2:1-16. Paul may have had in mind those morally upright, philosophically sophisticated Gentiles who prided themselves on their moderation. In the ancient world, such men were called Stoics and were represented by men like Socrates or Seneca. Or Paul may have had in mind secularized Jews, men like the Sadducees who denied miracles...who denied the resurrection...but still believed they were living by the high standard of God’s Law.

Of course, in the end it doesn’t really matter which group he had in mind. The reason it doesn’t matter is that Paul was much more concerned with a mindset than with a nationality. That’s why he pressed on and went after all those everywhere who had deluded themselves by thinking that they are somehow morally superior to others. That’s why he went after everyone everywhere who rejoiced in seeing the judgment of their lessers and who were still not turned to repent themselves. You will remember I hope how Paul’s stinging indictment against the moralist stung even against us and against that tendency deep in our prideful hearts to always think that we somehow deserve better than the man or woman next to us.

To accomplish his purpose, Paul used something called a **“diatribe.”** A **“diatribe”** is like an imaginary conversation in which the speaker answers imaginary objections posed to him by his audience. I made the point that it is an art form still used and practiced today. I used to use it quite frequently, when I taught school. I can especially remember when we had half days that the students objected to doing any work at all. As a result, I often began my classes

like this, **“Take out your textbooks and turn to such and such a page we will begin our lesson for the day. Now, you may be asking yourself, ‘He’s not really going to have class today is he Why can’t he just let us talk and relax like some of the other teachers?’ Well, if you are thinking that let me explain why we are going to have class. Your parents paid their hard earned money so that you might get an education. They pay so much for each day of school and really so much for each class. They didn’t designate any of the money they paid for relaxing. So, in order to avoid their perception that I am stealing their money, we are going to press on and consider the wonders of the Pythagorean theorem on page such and such.”**

I hope you can see that that is a diatribe. I was answering their objections even before they spoke them. I could do that because I knew their wicked little slothful hearts. Paul’s case was similar. However, I don’t think he was trying to guess what his detractors were thinking. In fact, I have no doubt that each imaginary objection he brings up in his letters was based upon some heckler’s actual objection he had heard on the street or in the synagogue while preaching or evangelizing. I am certain that the **“objections”** he answers here in Romans were based upon actual experiences, actual objections he heard on the streets of Corinth, Ephesus or even Jerusalem.

Now if you look carefully at the words of his response in each diatribe, you can surmise what his objectors were actually saying to him. I think we saw that last week when we looked at the passage containing Paul’s response to the **“high-minded moralist.”** Look at Romans 2:1?

^{NIV} **Romans 2:1** You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are

condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.

It is almost certain that Paul's objector here was saying something like, **"Everyone knows that what you're saying is true of most of the Gentiles. They're scum and deserve God's judgment. We too point out their sins but what's that got to do with us? We don't live like they do! As far as we are concerned God ought to judge them but what's that got to do with us, we're upright?"**

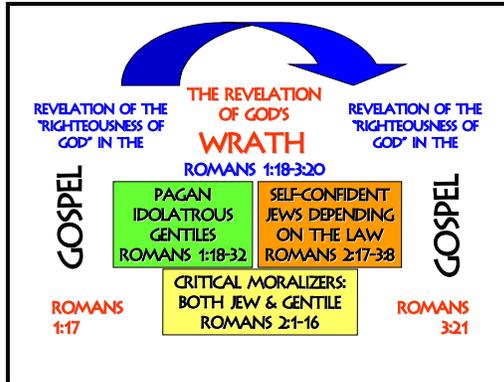
You will remember how Paul answered their objection, **"You judge them but you still do the exact same kind of things for which you judge them. Why is it you think God isn't going to judge you when you do the very same things?"**

Now we talked about all that last week at length and there is no need to plow the same ground over again but I did want to remind you where we are in Paul's argument. Today, we are going to be considering the third plank in Paul's argument for the universal sinfulness of mankind. The passage that we will be considering today starts in Romans 2:17 and I want you to turn there and see Paul's assertion that all men everywhere are sinful includes even the religious Jew. Look at verse 17.

^{NIV} **Romans 2:17**...Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to God;

Paul has finally turned his attention here to the religious Jew and I think it is fairly obvious how they voiced their objection, **"Look Paul, I understand perfectly well the pitiful plight of the pagan Gentiles. I understand what they are and why they have fallen under the condemnation of God. I understand that every bit as good as you do. I can also understand why you are arguing**

against the moralists. But let me put your mind at ease. I am not just anybody; I am a Jew...not a moralist...not a secular Jew but the real thing...a living breathing, law keeping, circumcised the eighth day, son of the covenant. Perhaps you ought to peddle that righteousness from God you keep talking about somewhere else. I don't need it. For heaven's sake...I'm a Jew."



You see what Paul is going to do in the passage before us this morning is to tear down the walls of the last and greatest citadel of man's inherent self-confidence...religiosity In Paul's day, that last refuge of religious self-righteousness was Judaism.²

Now, I perhaps ought to say a word about anti-Semitism here. In the fallen world in which we live, there has been for thousands of years a deep abiding hatred of the Jewish people. They have been mistreated; they have been abused and they have been hounded from here to there. Sometimes that mistreatment was clothed under the thinly veiled guise of promoting the Christian faith. I admit that and grieve over it. However, I do not believe that Paul's criticism of the religious Jew here is anti-Semitic. Paul was a Jew himself. He had a deep abiding love for his people. Listen to what he writes in Romans 9.

^{NIV} **Romans 9:1**...I speak the truth in Christ-- I am not lying, my conscience confirms it in the Holy Spirit-- ² I have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. ³ For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race, ⁴ the people of Israel.

Now do you get that? He is saying, **“If I had my way, I would be willing to endure the pangs of hell that my brothers might be saved.”** I do not see how anyone could have ever charged him with being anti-Semitic. But even if he had not been Jewish what he says would have not been anti-Semitic. First, not every criticism of Judaism is anti-Semitic. It is not anti-Semitic if it is true and if it is offered in love and affection. I for one do not accept the fact that evangelism of the Jews is an act of anti-Semitism. I think it is the exact opposite. I think it is the truest possible expression of genuine love and affection. We certainly do not evangelize the Jews because we hate the Jews. In the same way we do not evangelize the Mormons or the Jehovah’s Witnesses because we hate them. We do not argue with them because we hate them. We argue with them...we cajole them...we plead with them...because we have been shown the light of the mercy of God in the face of Christ. It seems to me that there is nothing more anti-Semitic in the world than to let our Jewish friends just slip off into eternity without having ever heard the truth of the gospel in Christ.

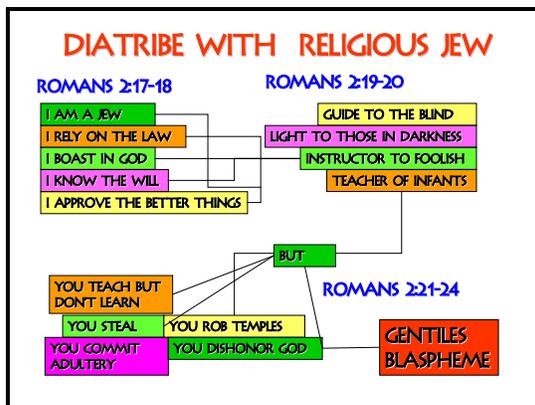
What person among you would not speak the truth to a person you loved in order to see them come to Christ? Still you can see the internal makings of a conflict. On the one hand Paul longed for the Jews to come to faith in Christ. On the other hand they bitterly opposed Paul’s message. I think that is the issue Paul was raising in chapter eleven when he said this:

NIV Romans 11:28...As far as the gospel is concerned, they are enemies on your account; but as far as election is concerned, they are loved on account of the patriarchs, ²⁹ for God's gifts and his call are irrevocable.

That's the same man that said he would be willing to suffer the terrors of hell for his people if only they might be saved. He loved his people...there is no doubt about that but he loved his Savior more, enough, in fact, to speak the truth to his beloved, unbelieving brothers. Now having said that, let's look at what he actually says to them. In these first few verses, Paul is going to note that the religious Jew claims to enjoy and, in fact, does enjoy some wonderful benefits because of who they are. See if you can pick them out as I read.

NIV Romans 2:17...Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and brag about your relationship to 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 infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—

Do you see any of the benefits that Paul's imaginary Jewish objector claims? S. Lewis Johnson noted in one of the journal articles I read that Paul's imaginary Jewish objector lists five particular claims relative to himself.³



- 1) His first claim was that he was a “Jew,” a member of God’s chosen people.
- 2) His second claim was that he relied or had confidence in the Law.
- 3) His third claim was that he had a special relationship God. God was their God, not the God of others.
- 4) His fourth claim was that he knew God’s will in a way others do not.
- 5) His final claim was the capacity to make finer moral distinctions than others. That is, he was arguing that he knew what mattered.⁴

Now let’s take a minute and think through each of these claims. When Paul’s imaginary debate partner argued that he was a “**Jew**,” he was arguing that he was a full-fledged member of God’s covenant people. The name “**Jew**” originally was applied to those people who lived in the land possessed by the tribe of Judah. It was later used to refer to those Hebrews who came back to Palestine after the exile and lived in that same area of Judah.⁵ In Paul’s day, it had come to be applied to any Israelite, no matter where they lived. To be a “**Jew**” then referred to the religious status of anyone who belonged to God’s covenant people.⁶

But he not only claimed to be a Jew, he also claimed a special reliance on the law. Now reliance on the law was not bad in and of itself as long as the expectation for what the law could actually do was not perverted. But when they regarded the very possession of the law as some sort of talisman or magical object to ward off their enemies they misused the law. You see the law was there to help them see their need of God. The law was not given to them that they might call God to be their lackey but rather than they might see their need of him as their Redeemer. I think this little illustration by S. Lewis Johnson will help you understand what I mean.

One is reminded of the story of the fashionable lady who visited a photographer to have her picture taken. She was a very ordinary looking

woman, but unfortunately she thought she was quite beautiful. As the photographer prepared to take her picture she said, **“Young man, see that you do me justice.”** **“Madam,”** the young man replied, **“It’s not justice you need; it’s mercy!”**⁷

You see the law was given to the nation to make them see their need of mercy. But they turned the law into something magical, a sort of magical incantation to ward off evil.

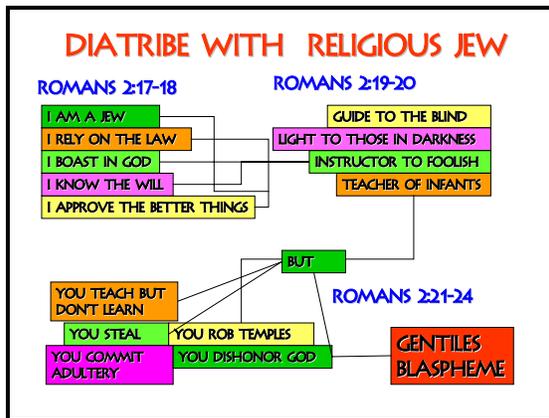
Now not only did the imaginary debater claim to be a **“Jew”** and the possessor of the law. But he also claimed to have a special relationship with God (you...brag about your relationship to God) and that special relationship with God allowed him to claim a genuine objective knowledge of God’s mind and will that others could not understand.

Oh, how I wish you could see verse 18 in Greek. It is so stark and so forceful. It is something like, **“You know THE will.”** It’s not, **“You know God’s will”** or even, **“You know His will.”** It’s, **“You know THE will”** and it seems to hint that this imaginary objector has such a high and lofty position that he can speak to all things everywhere. You see all of the verbs used in verses 17 and 18 are present tense verbs and in Greek and suggest something of a continual or durative sense. So the idea of the whole passage is something like this, **“You are continually calling yourself a Jew, continually making a point of possessing the law, constantly boasting of your relationship to God, constantly claiming you know the will, constantly affirming your ability to make very fine distinctions.”**

Now those are the claims that this Jewish objector makes in Paul’s argument relative to himself. But because he makes these claims about his relationship to

God he can also make special claims about his relationship to others. I think it might help to show you what I mean by reading verses 19-20 again.

^{NIV} **Romans 2:19**... 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 infants, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—



Do you see what Paul is saying? He is saying, “Now because you are a Jew, possess the law, have a special relationship with God, know the will and know the better things, the truer things...you consider yourself especially prepared to guide the blind, to light the way for those surrounded in darkness, to instruct the foolish, to teach the infants of this world...the Gentiles.”

And you know what? There is a sense in which that ought to have been perfectly true. The problem was that it was not true because the nation of Israel could not pull that off. That is why Paul will later say in Romans that Christ become the servant of the Jews to complete the deed that they were unable to complete. In fact, you ought to see this. Look for a moment at Romans 15:8.

^{NIV} **Romans 15:8**....For I tell you that Christ has become a servant of the Jews on behalf of God's truth, to confirm the promises made to the

patriarchs ⁹ so that the Gentiles may glorify God for his mercy, as it is written: **"Therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles; I will sing hymns to your name."** ¹⁰ Again, it says, **"Rejoice, O Gentiles, with his people."** ¹¹ And again, **"Praise the Lord, all you Gentiles, and sing praises to him, all you peoples."** ¹² And again, Isaiah says, **"The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him."**

Do you see what Paul is saying here? He is saying, **"The Gentiles should have praised God on account of you. You should have been a light to the Gentiles but you weren't and the reason you weren't is because your problem is the same as everyone else's...you only know what you know academically. You have no inherent righteousness of your own to pull this all off. That is why you too need a righteousness from God."**

You see Paul is telling them that they don't really know any of the stuff you claim experientially, or as the Puritans used to say, **"experimentally."** You can see that starting in verse 21, because starting there Paul begins to unravel strand by strand the rope that binds this Jewish objector to his God. He does that by asking a relentless series of questions that show the claims of this religious Jew are just that, claims.

^{NIV} **Romans 2:21**...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?⁸ ²³ You who brag about 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."⁹

Do you get Paul's analysis?

"You teach others but you don't teach yourself."

"You preach against stealing but you yourself steal."

“You hammer people about purity and faithfulness but you don’t really know anything about the reality of that because you’re really an adulterer yourself.”

“You hate idolatry yet you rob temples and you brag about your relationship to the law but you really don’t have a relationship to the law other than the fact that what you know you break.”

“The life that you live and the ‘faith’ that you possess only lead the Gentiles to do one thing...and that is to blaspheme the name of almighty God.”

Now you know it just would be sinful of me, I think, to pass by the extraordinary similarities between this imaginary Jewish objector of Paul’s day and the run-of-the-mill evangelical Christian of our day. Both make extraordinary claims to God’s truth and light and both are quick to pontificate or sit in judgment on the lives and actions of others. But neither one knows very much experimentally of God. When an unbeliever examines such lives under a microscope the only thing they are apt to learn are some new and variegated methods of blaspheming the name of God. Listen to what Spurgeon says here.

Someone once said to Charles Haddon Spurgeon, **“The Bible is the light of the world.”** The great preacher objected, saying, **“How can that be, when the world never reads the Bible? The Bible is the light of the church; the Christian is the light of the world. The world reads the Christian, not the Bible.”** Of course, the real light of the world is our Lord, but He is seen in His people, for they are **“light in the Lord”** (cf. Eph 5:8).¹⁰

Now brothers and sisters I know that you know that that’s true. I know that you know that we are called to live in such a manner that our lives ought to make the Christian life attractive and not repugnant and I know that regeneration is a work of the Spirit of God and that if He does not work in the heart of an unbeliever no faith will ever spring forth. But I have the gnawing feeling that

Paul's analysis here is a lot more pertinent than we give it credit to be. You see at very least our lives ought not to get in the way of unbelievers coming to faith.

I remember sharing the gospel once with a man only to have him say, **"You know my brother is a Christian. In fact, he is a pastor of a large and prosperous church. But you know what, he is absolutely miserable. He has no more joy than a cantaloupe out in a farmer's field somewhere. Why on earth would I want to be like him?"**

You know I really did not have a very good answer for this poor man. I tried to persuade him...I tried to win him over but his brother's actions completely drowned out what I had to say.

Oh brothers and sisters, is your Christianity academic or is it **"experiential."** I am not asking you if you are anti-intellectual. I am not asking you whether all of your religion is internally subjective so that you break into some sort of emotive liver quiver. I am asking you whether your faith is something that wells up in your heart and expresses itself in love and kindness to everyone you know or is it hidden away in the back closet of your mind and only pulled out and dusted off on Sunday morning? Do your **"underlings"** at work want to know your Savior or do they want to avoid Him as much as they want to avoid you? If your Christianity is not **"experiential"**...if it not **"experimental"** in the sense that it works itself out in actions and dealings with others, I have to tell you I suspect that someone somewhere is sitting along in darkness blaspheming the name of Christ because of you. I hope that person is not someone you work with. I hope it is not someone you love. I hope it is not your mate. I pray to God that it is not your children. Oh, I pray that our faith will be **"experimental"** and that such horrible accusations will never be true of you or true of me.

Listen to this comment from Donald Grey Barnhouse:

This is a text that can be applied across the face of history to parties of every stamp...It has belonged in turn to Jews, to Catholics, to Protestants, to Fundamentalists. Lips have been curled and men have sneered because of the action of almost all who profess a faith of any sort. Our text, then, is aiming at reality. God wants a profession of faith that shall expose truth to the world, a profession of life that shall proclaim holiness, a knowledge of righteousness that shall display justice. And he wants all of these attributes in Spirit and in truth, and not in counterfeit.¹¹

Up to now, Paul has been pursuing his Jewish objector almost as if they were playing chess. He has anticipated each move he is going to make, that is each objection he is going to state, and has responded to it even before it has been mouthed. Paul has countered each objection with his own, **“Check!”** I bring that up because here in verses 25-29, Paul finally says, **“Checkmate.”** This particular fact is noted by so many of the commentators that it is almost humorous.

Robert Haldane writes, **“Paul here pursues the Jew into his last retreat, in which he imagined himself most secure.”**¹²

Martin Lloyd-Jones writes, **“Here we come to what we may well call the last bastion of the Jew’s defense.”**¹³

“The Jewish objector is driven from his last ditch,” writes C.H. Dodd.¹⁴

“Still, the Jew had one final card to play. One final argument” says James Montgomery Boice.¹⁵

Now using the metaphors supplied by these great men of God, do you know that last retreat, that last bastion of defense, that last ditch, that last card was? It was circumcision. That’s seems strange to us today, I know but they put great stock in the act of circumcision as you can see in verse 25.

^{NIV} **Romans 2:25**...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 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 man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹ No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

You the Jews of Paul's day had come to view circumcision as something of a magic bullet. Many truly believed that if a man was circumcised it was a final guarantee of salvation. Now in case you are skeptical of that listen to these quotes given by Charles Hodge's in his commentary on Romans.

Rabbi Menachem, in his *Commentary on the Books of Moses*, says, "**Our Rabbis have said that no circumcised man will see hell.**" In the Jalkut Rubeni, number 1, it is taught, "**Circumcision saves from hell.**" In the Midrash Tillim, it is said, "**God swore to Abraham that no one who was circumcised should be sent to hell.**" In the book Akedath Jizehak, it is taught that "**Abraham sits before the gate of hell, and does not allow any circumcised Israelite to enter there.**"¹⁶

Now you may be thinking to yourself, "**You know there is a direct corollary between this passage and someone's confidence in the baptism they received as an infant.**" I would have to say, "**That is true.**" But I would also have to say there is a direct corollary between this passage and someone's confidence in the baptism they received as an adult. There is a direct corollary here between this passage and someone's confidence in having spoken in tongues, in having walked an aisle, in having prayed a sinner's prayer, in having taught Sunday school, in having worked a bus route, in having done anything that they feel

settled their salvation. **Paul's point is that any rite apart from reality is unrighteousness.** Let me say that again. **Paul's point is that any rite apart from reality is unrighteousness.**¹⁷

But he doesn't stop there he even turns it around the other way and says, **"The reality apart from the rite is actually righteousness."** He says that quite plainly when he says:

^{NIV} **Romans 2:27**...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.

Now I can't tell you how that passage would have struck the heart of a first century Jew. It would have been a little like telling a member of the Taliban, **"You know in the end you'll be judged by rich, decadent westerners."** The Jews of the first century would have been scandalized by the thought that the thought of their righteousness being judged by the Gentiles.

Of course, I ought to be especially careful here. Paul was not arguing that the Gentiles could keep the law. He was not even arguing that **"rites"** such as circumcision are wrong in and of themselves. What he was arguing...what he was hammering was the fact that all men everywhere need something more...they need the righteousness from God revealed in the gospel.

You see Paul was saying, **"You say you have the law. But you don't keep the law. You say you have the rite but clearly you don't possess the reality. Isn't it obvious to you that if the Gentiles possessed the reality, and I am not saying that they do, they would be righteous before God even without the rite?"**

You can see, I think, how understanding the section that way makes Romans 3:1 makes sense. You can sense how Paul's imaginary would have become frustrated enough to finally ask the question, **"So what are saying? Are you saying there is absolutely no advantage then to being a Jew at all?"**

Isn't that what 3:1 says?

NIV Romans 3:1...What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision? ² Much in every way! First of all, they have been entrusted with the very words of God. ¹⁸

I laughed at C.H. Dodd in his commentary on Romans when he said the logical answer to that question is, **"No advantage whatsoever."** I laughed because Dodd goes on to imply Paul could not lay down his Jewishness long enough to actually write what he knew to be true. That's rubbish, of course. Paul pushed along by the Holy Spirit wrote exactly what he wanted to say and part of that is that there were advantages to being a Jew. Later in the letter he will pick back that theme back up and develop it even more. But here his point is simple. Men need the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel. All men are stand naked and ashamed before the holiness of almighty God. I think that is why I like the following from Kent Hughes commentary on Romans so much.

Hans Christian Andersen's story of *The Emperor's New Clothes* is one of my favorites because it's funny and because it's so perceptive. It is a story of a certain emperor was very fond of appearances and clothing. In fact, he was something of a dandy. So when some con men came along and offered to weave him a rare and costly garment, he was very interested. He especially liked the idea that the garment would be invisible to all but the wise and pure in heart. The delighted emperor commissioned his new clothes at great cost, and the con men went to work doing...well, doing nothing.

Well the emperor was giddy with excitement and sent his chief minister to

see how things were going. Seeing no cloth on the busy looms, and not wanting the emperor to think him unwise or impure in heart, the official returned and raved about the cloth's fabulous beauty. The con men seized the opportunity and asked for more money. So the emperor sent another minister and he returned with an even more outrageous report. Finally, the emperor went to see the cloth himself and even though he didn't see anything on the looms either, he didn't want to appear stupid, so he proclaimed the cloth excellent and beautiful. He even gave the weavers medals.

Finally, on the day set for the grand parade, the con men dressed the emperor in his nakedness and then skipped town. As the emperor paraded before his people *quite naked*, the whole city clapped and joined in praising his new clothes, lest anyone think they were stupid. And so the parade continued — until in a moment of quietness a child was to say, **“Look momma, the emperor has no clothes! He's naked.”** At once everyone knew the truth, including the emperor.¹⁹

You see that is what Paul dos to the Jew here. He strips him bare. Of course when he strips him bare, he strips us bare a well.

Two weeks ago, I mentioned that one reason we need the revelation of a righteousness from God in the gospel is that we are sinful, deluded and depraved. In other words we are **“lost”**. Last week, I reminded you that we need the revelation of a righteousness from God because **“judgment is coming”** and the standard of judgment is the matchless righteousness of the Lord Jesus Himself.

This morning let me pose in closing one other reason why we need a righteousness from God. We need a “righteousness from God as it is revealed in the gospel because we are **“naked.”** We have no righteousness of our own. We have sewn ourselves fig leaves out of pride and the Word of God has just

stripped them away. All that we thought covered us has been defiled by our sinful, self-absorbed faithlessness, even, I'm afraid, our religiosity.

¹ Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans*, trans. Edwin C. Hoskyns, from the 6th ed., (London: Oxford University Press, 1963), 70. "Since God is the Judge, every righteousness of men is thrust into obscurity every criticism which men exercise upon the ungodly and every busy attempt to convert them become of trivial importance. Beyond human good and evil the arm of God k extended in power; and men are advised to beware of too daring....A disturbing and surprising piece of information from the invisibility of the other side. God pronounces those who awake to be asleep, believers to be unbelievers the righteous be unrighteous. Men who bear upon them the stamp of impress of revelation remain still men of the world. Men must note carefully this possibility of the judgment of God their righteousness."

² C.K. Barrett, *Romans: The Epistle to the Romans* (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1957), 130. "As we have seen, Paul appears to have the Jew basically in mind from the beginning of this chapter. But some of what he has said refers to the Gentile and some is perfectly general, which leads some scholars to conclude that Paul is not thinking about the Jew in that section. But there can be no doubt about what he says from this point on. He names the Jew explicitly, and the way he writes about circumcision and the like makes it plain that he is talking about the Jew. He emphasizes that to be a member of a chosen race is to have a position of responsibility, not simply of privilege. One must not only know the right but do it."

³ S. Lewis Johnson, "Studies in Romans Part VI: Rite Versus Righteousness." *Bibliotheca Sacra* 130 (April 1973): 154-155.

⁴ Douglas Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans* in the New International Commentary of the New Testament (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1996), 159-160.

⁵ NIV **Zechariah 8:23**...This is what the LORD Almighty says: "In those days ten men from all languages and nations will take firm hold of one Jew by the hem of his robe and say, 'Let us go with you, because we have heard that God is with you.'"

⁶ Moo, 159.

⁷ Johnson, 155-156.

⁸ F.F. Bruce, *Epistle of Paul to the Romans* (London: Tyndale Press, 1963), 93. "Literally, 'do you rob temples?' The Greek verb is *hierosuleo*. What Paul has in mind is difficult to say; perhaps he refers to some scandalous incident like that of AD 19 recorded by Josephus (*Antiquities* xviii.3.5.), when four Jews of Rome, led by one who professed to teach the Jewish faith to interested Gentiles, persuaded a noble Roman lady, a convert to Judaism, to make a munificent contribution to the temple at Jerusalem, but appropriated it for their own uses. When the matter came to light, the Emperor Tiberius expelled all resident Jews from Rome (see p. 13). An incident like this brought the honored name of 'Jew' into disrepute among the Gentiles."

See also Flavius Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews* 19.3.5. He writes, "There was a man who was a Jew, but had been driven away from his own country by an accusation laid against him for

transgressing their laws, and by the fear he was under of punishment for the same; but in all respects a wicked man. He, then living at Rome, professed to instruct men in the wisdom of the laws of Moses. He procured also three other men, entirely of the same character with himself, to be his partners. These men persuaded Fulvia, a woman of great dignity, and one that had embraced the Jewish religion, to send purple and gold to the temple at Jerusalem; and when they had gotten them, they employed them for their own uses, and spent the money themselves, on which account it was that they at first required it of her. Whereupon Tiberius, who had been informed of the thing by Saturninus, the husband of Fulvia, who desired inquiry might be made about it, ordered all the Jews to be banished out of Rome; at which time the consuls listed four thousand men out of them, and sent them to the island Sardinia; but punished a greater number of them, who were unwilling to become soldiers, on account of keeping the laws of their forefathers. Thus were these Jews banished out of the city by the wickedness of four men.”

⁹ NIV **Ezekiel 36:20**...And wherever they went among the nations they profaned my holy name, for it was said of them, 'These are the LORD's people, and yet they had to leave his land.' ²¹I had concern for my holy name, which the house of Israel profaned among the nations where they had gone. ²²"Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: It is not for your sake, O house of Israel, that I am going to do these things, but for the sake of my holy name, which you have profaned among the nations where you have gone. ²³I will show the holiness of my great name, which has been profaned among the nations, the name you have profaned among them. Then the nations will know that I am the LORD, declares the Sovereign LORD, when I show myself holy through you before their eyes.

¹⁰ Johnson, 158.

¹¹ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Romans Volume 1: Man's Ruin 1:1-32 and God's Wrath 2:1-3:20* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 1952 and 1953; reprint 1994), 122.

¹² Robert Haldane, *Commentary on Romans*, (Escondido, CA: Ephesians Four Group, 1999), 2:25.

¹³ D. Martyn Lloyd Jones, *Romans: Exposition of Chapter 2:1-3:20, The Righteous Judgment of God* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth, 1989), 152.

¹⁴ C.H. Dodd, *The Epistle to the Romans* in the Moffatt NT Commentary Series (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1932; reprinted 1947), 43.

¹⁵ James Montgomery Boice, *Romans Volume 1: Justification By Faith, Romans 1-4* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1991), 258.

¹⁶ Charles Hodge, *Romans* from the Crossway Classic Series edited by Alister McGrath and J.I. Packer, (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossways Books, 1993), 60.

¹⁷ Johnson, 160.

¹⁸ Dodd, 43. "The Jewish objector is thus driven from his last ditch. **"Then what is the Jew's superiority?"** he exclaims; **"what is the good of circumcision?"** The logical answer on the basis

of Paul's argument is, "**None whatever!**" But the trouble is that the Jewish objector "**is in Paul's own mind.**" His Pharisaism—or shall we say, his patriotism?—was too deeply engrained for him to put right out of his mind the idea that somehow the divine covenant with mankind had a "**most favored nation clause.**" And so he surprisingly answers his own question: "**Much in every way.**" Then he embarks on what should have been a list of the various ways in which the Jews had such superiority, but actually gets no further than the first item this to begin with—Jews were entrusted with the scriptures of God."

¹⁹ R. Kent Hughes, *Romans: Righteousness from Heaven* (Wheaton, Illinois: Crossways Books, 1991), 71-72. This section is adapted completely from Hughes' book.