

# Sin and Condemnation: The World's need to get right with God

(58)

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[Romans 1:18-3:20](#)

(Continuation from 02/26/17)

## D. God's Case against the Religionist (Jew), [Romans 2:17-29](#)

[\(Romans 2:17-29\)](#) **Introduction— Religionist— Jew:** this passage is an excellent study of the Christian religionist or church member as well as of the Jew.

God's case against the Christian religionist **includes four points**.

1. **The religionist professes religion (v.17-20).**
2. **The religionist fails to live what he professes (v.21-24).**
3. **The religionist believes that a ritual (circumcision) is the way to secure God's approval (v.25-27).**
4. **The religionist misses the whole point: a true religionist is a man who is righteous inwardly (v.28-29).**

### 1. [\(Romans 2:17-20\)](#) **Religionists: the religionist (Jew) professes religion.**

**Romans 2:17-20 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> But if you bear the name "Jew" and rely upon the Law and boast in God,  
<sup>18</sup> and know *His* will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law,  
<sup>19</sup> and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,  
<sup>20</sup> a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth.

Practice what you preach! Do what you say! Back up your lips with your life! All of these statements verbalize the sentiments of most people in society today. We look for consistency in the lives of others even though we might be inconsistent ourselves.

Profession without practice was not only the curse of the Jews; it has been throughout the ages the curse of the Church. During his early days in South Africa (in Pretoria), **Gandhi** inquired into Christianity. For several Sundays, he attended a Christian Church, but, he says, **“the congregation did not strike me as being particularly religious; they were not an assembly of devout souls, but appeared rather to be worldly-minded people going to Church for recreation and in conformity to custom.”** He, therefore, concluded that there was nothing in Christianity which he did not already possess —and so Gandhi was lost to the Christian Church with incalculable consequences to India and to the world.

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Society not only demands consistency and genuineness, God demands it too as we begin to pluck flowers of His truth from the meadows of [Romans chapter two](#). Notice verse seventeen.

## I. THE COCKINESS OF THE SELF-RIGHTEOUS—[Romans 2:17-18](#)

[Romans 2:17-18 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> But if you bear the name “Jew” and rely upon the Law and boast in God,  
<sup>18</sup> and know *His* will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law,

Paul, a born-again Jew, targets the self-righteous Jew who is proud, boastful, and cocky in his identification. These folks are like some unteachable Christians that fill our churches today who are comfortable in their lukewarmness and pride. They can’t be taught anything because they “**know it all**” or don’t want to know anything. Their attitude is, “**Leave me alone!**”

Do you find yourself in this predicament? Are you not growing in the Lord because you don’t want to grow? Are you harboring anger and bitterness toward others, an anger which is hindering your spiritual maturity? If so, the sirens are going off because you are in trouble and need to change direction immediately in your life.

These self-righteous Jews were judging others, especially the Gentiles. God is about to spiritually punch them in the nose they are using to look down at other people. Paul begins by listing their blessings and advantages before he yanks out the rug beneath them.

1. They called themselves Jews. They were very proud of this fact. The word first appeared in [2 Kings 16:6](#)

[2 Kings 16:6 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> At that time Rezin king of Aram recovered Elath for Aram, and cleared the **Judeans** [yehûdî= yeh-hoo-dee'] out of Elath entirely; and the Arameans came to Elath and have lived there to this day.

[2 Kings 16:6 \(NKJV\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> At that time Rezin king of Syria captured Elath for Syria, and drove the men of **Judah** [yehûdî= yeh-hoo-dee'] from Elath. Then the Edomites went to Elath, and dwell there to this day.

[2 Kings 16:6 \(KJV\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> At that time Rezin king of Syria recovered Elath to Syria, and drave the **Jews** [yehûdî= yeh-hoo-dee'] from Elath: and the Syrians came to Elath, and dwelt there unto this day.

[2 Kings 16:6 \(AMP\)](#)

<sup>6</sup> At that time, Rezin king of Syria got back Elath [in Edom] for Syria and drove the **Jews** [yehûdî= yeh-hoo-dee'] from [it]. The Syrians came to Elath and dwell there to this day.

[yehûdî= yeh-hoo-dee'] a *Jehudite* (i.e. Judaite or Jew), or descendant of Jehudah (i.e. Judah):- Jew.

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The Israelites that remained in Palestine or returned to it after the Babylonian Captivity were called Jews. Paul referred to himself as a **Jew** (*religious name*); as an **Israelite** (*national name*); and as a **Hebrew** (*racial name*).

2. They relied or rested in the Law. This was a picture of the blind and mechanical reliance upon the Law.

3. They boasted and bragged about their relationship with God. They were God's chosen ones.

4. They knew God's will because of the Scriptures.

5. They discerned matters that were excellent. What was supposed to be a blessing, ended up becoming a burden to the Jews years later. Their cockiness was costly. Their judgmental spirit and unteachableness robbed them of God's blessings. The same consequences continue today, not only for the Jews, but for anyone who will not submit to Jesus Christ.

People long for economic security, job security, marital security, national security, health security, home security, security of social position, and many other kinds of security. It is the natural impulse of self-preservation to want security. Yet, despite the claims of independence and self-sufficiency that many people make, they know instinctively that, in themselves, they are not completely secure.

A measure of economic security can be had from such things as having a long-term work contract, working for or owning a business that has proven to do well even in hard times, or by having a diversified portfolio of investments. A measure of home security can be achieved by burglar alarms, high fences, or watch dogs. A measure of national security can be had from a well-trained, well-equipped military force. But history and personal experience have proved over and over again that such things cannot guarantee absolute security

When they bother to think about it, most people hope for some form of *eternal* security. If they do not believe in heaven and hell, they hope death will be the end of existence, that it will usher them into an impersonal, unconscious nothingness, or recycle them through another lifetime in an endless linking chain of lives better than the ones before.

But Paul has already declared unequivocally that, whether they realize or admit it or not, *all* men, even the most pagan reprobates, know something of God's "**invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature**" ([Romans 1:18-21](#)).

[Romans 1:18-21 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>18</sup> **For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,**

<sup>19</sup> **because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.**

<sup>20</sup> **For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.**

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**<sup>21</sup> For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.**

Every person, Jew and Gentile alike, has the witness of heart and conscience, by which he is able to discern basic right from wrong ([Romans 2:14-15](#)).

**Romans 2:14-15 (NASB)**

**<sup>14</sup> For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves,**

**<sup>15</sup> in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,**

And all people know to some degree that those who do not live up to God's standards of righteousness are "worthy of death" ([Romans 1:32](#)).

**Romans 1:32 (NASB)**

**<sup>32</sup> And although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.**

Most have this gnawing fear that God is going to judge their sin, that one day they will be held accountable for the way they have lived. And Scripture says they will live and die only once, "and after this comes judgment" ([Hebrews 9:27](#)).

**Hebrews 9:27 (NASB)**

**<sup>27</sup> And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment.**

Therefore, instinctively people hope that, in some way or another, they can escape that judgment. Whether consciously or unconsciously, religiously or irreligious, they understand deep within themselves that they need to deal with their spiritual insecurity. They want the assurance that they will not be punished for their evil. In the attempt to do that, men have devised countless false ideas and philosophies to try to escape the punishment they innately know they deserve.

Some people build up a false sense of spiritual security by trying to convince themselves they are basically good and that a just God could not condemn good people to hell. They believe that their good works and intentions outweigh their bad ones and that, in the balance, they are pleasing and acceptable to God. Others believe that God is too loving to send anyone to hell and will ultimately save even the most wicked of sinners. Still others insist that there is no God and that the idea of a final divine judgment is therefore ludicrous. These beliefs are so common that those who put their security in them can find reassurance in the large numbers of other people doing the same. They even design religions to affirm these views.

Far from being cruel and insensitive, the Christian who exposes such false ideas of spiritual security does a great service to those he warns. If a person is to be commended for warning a family that their house is on fire or that a bridge they are about to cross might collapse under them, how much more is a believer to be commended when he warns the unsaved of their lostness and condemnation apart from Jesus Christ. No greater kindness can possibly be offered

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a person than that of showing him the way of salvation. But before he can have motivation for being saved, he obviously must be convinced that he is lost.

As the forerunner of Jesus Christ, John the Baptist preached a sobering message of repentance from sin ([Matthew 3:2](#)).

[Matthew 3:2 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>2</sup> **“Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”**

Jesus began His own ministry preaching the same message ([Matthew 4:17](#)).

[Matthew 4:17 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>17</sup> **From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”**

Perhaps more than anything else, the Sermon on the Mount is an extended series of warnings about such false spiritual security. In that message the Lord declares unequivocally that men’s righteousness, attitudes, good works, relationships, professions, prayers, fasting, ceremonies, and generosity can never measure up to the standard of perfect holiness to which God holds them accountable ([Matthew 5:48](#)).

[Matthew 5:48 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>48</sup> **“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”**

Jesus stripped naked the hypocritical and legalistic false securities of the Judaism of that day. He declared that those who trust in outward substitutes for true righteousness will one day say to Him,

[Matthew 7:22-23 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>22</sup> **“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’**

<sup>23</sup> **“And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”**

The person who builds his religious house on any self-made foundation is certain to have it washed away by the storm of God’s judgment ([Matthew 7:26-27](#)).

[Matthew 7:26-27 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>26</sup> **“Everyone who hears these words of Mine and does not act on them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand.**

<sup>27</sup> **The rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and slammed against that house; and it fell—and great was its fall.”**

Having shown how both the moral Jew and the moral Gentile alike will be brought before God’s great tribunal in the end times and have no basis for any sense of well-being and security ([Romans 2:1-16](#)), Paul now focuses exclusively on the Jews, the covenant people of God. They had far greater light and blessings than the Gentiles. But as the apostle now points out, that greater privilege made them more accountable to God, not less, as most of them supposed. Before he explains the way of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ, he shatters the idea of false

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spiritual security that most Jews had in their heritage ([Romans 2:17a](#)), in their knowledge ([Romans 2:17b-24](#)), and in their ceremony ([Romans 2:25-29](#)).