

We will now move on to our next passage in our outline.

The wrath of God.

1:18-32 The condemnation of the primitive pagan

2:1-16 The condemnation of the self righteous

Sophisticate

2:17-3:8 The condemnation of the Jew

3:9-20 The condemnation of the world.

We will look at Chapter 2 verse 17 to 29 this week and chapter 3 verse 8 next week.

Paul now shifts his focus to the Jew. Verse 17 makes that very clear.

Romans 2

¹⁷Indeed you are called a Jew, and rest on the law, and make your boast in God,

¹⁸and know *His* will, and approve the things that are excellent, being instructed out of the law,

¹⁹and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

²⁰an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.

Who is Paul talking to here? The context conveys that it is to **the Jews who are judging hypocritically.**

In vs 17-20 Paul lays out a breakdown of the reasons that the Jews tend to think they are **superior** to all others. Paul lays out the obstacles to a Jew having a clear understanding of **where they REALLY stand** with God. The obstacles are not due the things that God has given them. The Jews were given wonderful things, excellent things. But it is how the Jews **consider** those blessings, how they **think about** those blessings, that becomes an obstacle.

Paul's lays out a list of those things that the Jews have. And that is actually good in itself. But the Jews think that, by nature of having been given these blessings, they are

automatically in a safe status with God. Paul will do battle with this idea with great force until they see that these items do not, by themselves, do enough to place them in a saved status. **Having the blessings that God has given them does not save them.** They must have a faith that shows itself by obedience.

Called a Jew- The word Jew came about sometime before II Kings where it is first used. It came from the name of Judah. It was probably chosen to **most closely identify Israelites with the tribe that was most dedicated to God** and from whom the Messiah would come.

Rest on the law- the Jews rest their confidence on the fact that it is they who have been given the law. This makes them special by their reckoning. They think that since they are given the law, they must be God's favorites and since they have the morally superior law, they themselves must be **morally superior, morally preferable**, to those who have not been given the law.

make your boast in God- The Jews were given information about the one True God. And not only that, they have a history filled with that God's interactions with them. Since they are descendants of those people, it is easy to assume they are somehow favored by God. NIV says that **they brag about their relationship to God** and this is probably the meaning here. The Jews are monotheistic and they have the **only true God**. And this **only true God** has chosen their nation to communicate with. They could easily assume that since they worship **the one true God** that they are **favored** by the God they worship.

know His will- The Jews truly do know God's will. They have His documents that state His will. The documents are accurate. They can state His will. They have that information.

approve the things that are excellent- the word used here means that they, by testing, know that which is approved. The Jews can think clearly about the law, about

what God wants. They could pass a test better than any other people about what God wants, about what God says, about what God expects. Since they are able to test and approve, they think that should count for something. Notice here that the problem is not that the Jews are judging God's word wrongly. That isn't the problem. They are right about much of what God says, as long as you don't ask them how they apply it to their own actions.

being instructed out of the law- The Jews have paid attention to the law. They were taught, instructed. And the instruction was received. While other people were being taught from other sources, the Jews were being instructed from the document that God passed down. Surely that ought to get them some points.

are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, - The Jews considered themselves to have all the answers and everyone else was lacking knowledge, the other peoples had no idea about God. They saw it as their mission to speak God's truth to those who are blind.

a light to those who are in darkness- this is probably describing the gentiles. Frequently gentiles were described by Jews as living in darkness. The Jews viewed themselves as the only light the gentiles had. They may not have gone much out of their way to give them this truth, but they saw themselves as the possessors of that truth.

²⁰**an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes**- this is probably speaking of proselytes or new converts.

having the form of knowledge and truth in the law.- The word for form is the same one used to say that some have a form of godliness, but lack the power. It is a form that looks like something. They appear to get the real heart of the law, they appear to be the experts, but they miss the real heart of it. It looks like they have knowledge, and they surely do have some. But they miss the point. They appear to have the truth, but while holding it they miss it. They miss what it is supposed to do **in their own** lives.

Instead of the law humbling them, it has made them proud. Instead of making them compliant, it has made them hard. Instead of making them true, it has proven them false.

Now Paul begins to turn the tables. He has addressed those things that make the Jews feel like they are **God's head of the class**. What he says next is going to be very very hard for the Jews to hear. It will be **repulsive** to their pride and their understanding of themselves. They had learned to think of themselves in this superior way. It would be easy for them to regard Paul as a traitor for what he is about to say.

It is also pretty hard for us to hear it as well. We too have had many of the advantages that the Jews had. We know God's word. We have had good teaching. We can pass the test questions about God's will. We see ourselves as lights shining in a dark place for Christ. But we need to ask ourselves the question- **does this shoe that Paul is about to describe fit us?**

²¹You, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that a man should not steal, do you steal?

The problem that Paul points out again is hypocritical judging. You know the right stuff. You teach the right stuff. But you **do** the wrong stuff.

Here we see that the Jews teach. And like Christ said, when they are teaching the plain simple word of God, they are correct. But you can't count on them to do it.

Paul's logic is simple. The questions he is about to ask make a simple point. Your talk doesn't match your walk. You preach different than you live. And your teaching condemns what you do, while you think that **the knowing** proves you superior. You miss the point. **Doing** is the proof of what you **are**, not **knowing**.

Now how is he applying this? Is he applying it like Christ did on the sermon on the mount? Christ showed that the

Jews were breaking the law even while they thought they were obeying it. He extended the law into internal motives and thoughts and intentions. Are the Jews he is speaking to guilty of the sin while maintaining an appearance of innocence?

His first example is stealing. You say don't steal, but do you steal? The inference is that they **DO** steal. How do they steal? Paul doesn't go on to say. But it is assumed that the listeners would understand.

²²You who say, "Do not commit adultery," do you commit adultery?

Again- they preach accurately, but even while they preach the truth they contradict it with their lives. The Pharisees were known to divorce their wives when better models were available. They would couch their actions in legitimate legal terms, but Christ said that they were causing adultery by what they did. They were guilty of the act of adultery, even when they were shrouding their actions with a legal robe of legal legitimacy. Jesus also applied this concept even to looking lustfully at a woman. Maybe this is the kind of adultery these people have become comfortable with.

You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

The assumption may be that these Jews will rob a temple when they get a chance. They will make a long show of being against any kind of idolatry. But when they get a chance to slip into a temple of another so called God they think nothing of slipping an idol under their coat. They will be sure not to worship it but their greed will cause them to take it even though it is not theirs.

It may also be that, while these Jews would never step foot into one of these dens of iniquities, they may still be more than willing to make a profit in the buying and selling necessary **to float such a function**. The commentators disagree on this point. It is a very tough point to have

clarity on exactly how the Jews may have been committing this crime.

²³You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?

The final point is that even though you brag about the fact that the Jews have been given the Word of God, you have been given the law. You are a special favored nation. But with this great gift you have been given, **do you do what it says?** You brag about having it but by the way you regard it, you might as well not. You know it, but you don't do it. And not doing it dishonors God. They would make lengthy shows of honoring God but turn right around and dishonor Him by their deeds.

²⁴For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written.

This appears to be a combination of Is 52:5 and Ezek 36:22

Is 52:5 Now therefore, what have I here," says the Lord, "That My people are taken away for nothing? Those who rule over them Make them wail," says the Lord, "And **My name is blasphemed continually every day.**

Ezek 36:22 "Therefore say to the house of Israel, 'Thus says the Lord GOD: "I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, **which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.**"

So we see here that the gentile that the Jew feels so much superior to, is condemning the Jew and his behavior as it falls so far short of what scripture says.

So what is true Jewishness... or who are the true people of God? Is it those who happen to have been born Jewish? Or is it something else. The Jews obviously are not getting it right. Who is? Paul starts with circumcision, the thing

that Jews tend to think gives them a ticket to avoid God's judgment. It was a popular thought back then that no circumcised person would ever enter Gehenna or hell. It is said that Abraham would sit at the gate and see to it that no circumcised person would enter.

²⁵For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

Profitable- to assist, to be useful or advantageous, to profit

Circumcision was the sign of the covenant God had with the Jewish people. They were told to do this act and that the act would set them apart. It was to show the set-apartness of the Jewish nation for God's purposes. So that relationship is good if a Jew were to live in it, if he were to be obedient, if he were to live according to the relationship, according to the covenant. But if the Jew breaks the law, the circumcision has no mystical value in itself. It is the **reality** of the relationship that matters most, not the **sign** of the relationship. The sign only has value if the true relationship exists. And if a Jew were to truly **have** that relationship, he would exhibit obedience and faith. Much like Baptism has value to us, but only as the person stands in a true relationship with Jesus Christ. Baptism doesn't accomplish anything but it signifies something, it shows something, it symbolizes something. And if the something that it shows is not true, the baptism has no value at all. It is no different than if you had never been baptized. To the Jew it was no different than if they had been **uncircumcised**. There would have been no difference since there was no real viable life change. There was no faithful relationship.

²⁶Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?

If the previous statement is true, logically this statement is true as well. If a person displays the relationship, the absence of the symbol doesn't make the relationship less real. If the uncircumcised man lives in a relationship to Christ and obeys the law, does it really matter that they don't have the symbol of the relationship when they have the real relationship itself? Won't he be regarded as if he were circumcised?

Note here that God judges the reality of what a man is. A person with a relationship with Christ will live by the law that has been put in his heart.

A question arises here in my mind that I had to answer. The question is, "What is meant by "an uncircumcised man keeping the righteous requirement of the law"?"

Is this just a hypothetical statement? IF AN UNCIRCUMCISED MAN WERE TO KEEP THE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW (He really isn't but if he were..) Let's call this the Hypothetical view.

Or is this simply referring to Christ's completed work that justifies a man?

IF AN UNCIRCUMCISED MAN KEEPS THE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENTS OF THE LAW BY REFERRING TO CHRIST'S COMPLETED WORK TO MEET THOSE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENTS AT THE TIME OF ATONEMENT (The uncircumcised man **will** not, and **need** not, keep the righteous requirement of the law in any way since Christ has already done that for him)

Let's call this the historical view.

Or is this referring to the fruit of Godly living? IF AN UNCIRCUMCISED MAN KEEPS THE RIGHTEOUS REQUIREMENT OF THE LAW BY BEARING THE FRUIT THAT COMES FROM WALKING ACCORDING TO HOLY SPIRITS LEADING

Let's call this the habitual view.

In the interest of time I have broken that discussion out from this week's sermon and will deal with it next week. I believe the third option is the correct one. But study it with me so you'll be prepared for next week.

²⁷And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?

The tables are turned here and it is very offensive to the listening Jew. The true gentile converts will not only **not be judged** by the Jew, but **they will judge the Jew**. Even though the Jew has his spiritual heritage, they have a written code and a circumcision, even though those things are true, the Gentile will be placed in Judgment over the Jew. The gentile described here fulfills the law. The Jew is a transgressor of it.

²⁸For he is not a Jew who *is one* outwardly, nor *is* circumcision that which *is* outward in the flesh;

²⁹but *he is* a Jew who *is one* inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise *is* not from men but from God.

The Old Testament has plenty of evidence that the outward sign of circumcision was not God's major focus. It truly was required and almost cost Moses his life because his sons had not been circumcised Ex 4:24. But God was concerned with an internal difference that was demonstrated by an external difference.

Duet 10:15 The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day. 16Therefore **circumcise the foreskin of your heart**, and be stiff-necked no longer. 17For the Lord your God is God of gods and Lord of lords, the great God, mighty and awesome, who shows no partiality nor takes a bribe. 18He administers justice for the fatherless and the widow, and loves the stranger, giving him

food and clothing. 19Therefore love the stranger, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Duet 30:5 Then the Lord your God will bring you to the land which your fathers possessed, and you shall possess it. He will prosper you and multiply you more than your fathers. 6 And the Lord your God **will circumcise your heart** and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live.

Jeremiah 9:23-26 Thus says the Lord:
"Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom,
Let not the mighty man glory in his might,
Nor let the rich man glory in his riches;
24 But let him who glories glory in this,
That he understands and knows Me,
That I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment,
and righteousness in the earth.
For in these I delight," says the Lord.

25 "Behold, the days are coming," says the Lord, "that **I will punish all who are circumcised with the uncircumcised**—26 Egypt, Judah, Edom, the people of Ammon, Moab, and all who are in the farthest corners, who dwell in the wilderness. **For all these nations are uncircumcised, and all the house of Israel are uncircumcised in the heart.**"

Jeremiah 6:9,10 Thus says the Lord of hosts:
"They shall thoroughly glean as a vine the remnant of Israel;
As a grape-gatherer, put your hand back into the branches."
10 To whom shall I speak and give warning,
That they may hear?

Indeed their ear is uncircumcised,

And they cannot give heed.

Behold, the word of the Lord is a reproach to them;

They have no delight in it.

These passages describes a big obstacle to any Jewish listener. They viewed themselves as God's chosen people by their bloodlines. Paul was saying here that the bloodline doesn't make you a true Jew any more than your shoe size does. A true Jew is a worshipper of God in spirit and truth. It is a person that shows the fruit of a changed life. We cannot hope for anything natural to win us a seat in heaven. We must have an experience of the supernatural. We must be born again. We must have the law in our hearts. We must have our heart's circumcised, our ears circumcised. We must have the miraculous change toward God that only a new birth can accomplish. And this will be shown by a life that is submissive to God's will.

For application this week, I would like to look to emphasize something this text brings out. It is the danger of false confidence. Look at verses 17-20 again. Think about the implications of this list.

1. The listeners had excellent theology.

Paul wasn't talking to the liberal theologians. He wasn't talking to the those who had left the straight line of good theology. He was talking to people who were getting it right theologically. They were teaching the right stuff. They were taking God's message and teaching it. They may have been impressive in their scholarship and memorization skills.

2. **The listeners had carried out the proper ceremonies** that God's people should do. As Jews, they should have been circumcised and they were. They did all the right things ceremonially. I think for us the modern day equivalent in our religious circles would be baptism. These

were the kind of folks that wouldn't have skipped out on the ritual. They were careful about the technicalities.

3. **And look, the listeners even had some of the proper mission in mind.** They were teaching God's word to those who didn't know it. They were taking the light into the darkness.

Look how good they looked. They were like the modern day evangelical. How much like us would they look? How true of us is this?

These people thought they had great reason for confidence. They had an impressive list. They were confident. But their confidence was **false**.

The things on their list weren't enough. **The people didn't do what they knew to do.** They didn't apply what God said... to **themselves**. They didn't act as if God was giving them the power to stop doing the things that He hates. They didn't receive the blessings in the manner that they were intended. They somehow thought that if their **thinking** was changed, and they had the **external form** of their religion, that was enough. A change of life wasn't required. All they needed was to be **right about** what God says, to **do the proper ceremonies** in a rigidly accurate manner and to keep in mind that the blind also needed this accurate doctrine.

So their lives didn't show the changes necessary. Their lives didn't prove anything of God's work in their hearts because they **had** no change of heart. They didn't stop doing what they knew to stop. They were boasting in God, but God was not boasting about them. And their failure was not in their **ability to judge**, it was in **their willingness to obey**. They wouldn't put their money where their mouth was.

How about us? We believe the right things. We've been baptized and we go to church. We even tell others the gospel when it is convenient, and sometimes when it isn't. We support the proper missions, even the ones that are

most biblically accurate. But do we put our money where our mouth is? Do we **do what Christ says**? If someone were to watch us this week, what would they see? Would they see **faithfulness** or **hypocrisy**? Would they see us following the advice that we earnestly give to our fellow believers? Would they see us living according to the proper judging we are able to give to others? Or are we swayed off course with the first difficulty? Do we submit to God's word and the Holy Spirit, or do we go running off course at flesh's first impulsive call? We at Ferndale are good talkers for the most part. But are we good walkers? Are our lives behind closed doors similar to the lives we live in public?

The **saddest** part of all the hiding we may do, all the effort we spend **pretending** things are better than they are, the saddest thing is **we don't have to pretend**. If we are God's chosen people, God knew this stuff about us when He chose us. We aren't accomplishing anything in trying to look good. All we do with every effort is to thwart the ministry Christ would send **to us** through the gifts of the believers He has placed **around us**. Maybe we fear that we **cannot** obey. We have failed so many times we are afraid that we cannot obey. So we accept a lower standard for ourselves. We've created a way that God's Word doesn't really apply to our lives. Our behavior is an exception to God's word.

Well this morning, of all mornings of the year, we are **confronted** with a bold brazen fact that makes all of that **defeatist** thinking, all those **lies** and **excuses** seem absurd. We call it **Easter**. Christ was laying on a stone slab. He was as dead as a person can get. He had no life in his mortal frame. And God raised Him from the dead. He took that dead body and it stood up and it left that tomb. And that power.... The power that made a dead body live... that power is now in every believer.

Romans 8: **11** **But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.**

12Therefore, brethren, we are debtors—not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. 13For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. **14For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. 15For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.”** 16The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17and if children, then heirs—heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Let us not be of those who live in the danger of a false confidence like is described in our text. Let us boldly, by faith, believe what scripture says about the powerful gospel that has been preached to us from God in His word. And let us rest our faith with absolute confidence that the Author of our Faith is also our perfect-or of our faith.

Hebrews 12: 1Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, 2looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.