Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

False Security, Part 1
Scripture: Romans 2:17-20
Code: 45-22

Romans chapter 2 is our study tonight. And I was just thinking, this may be about the thousandth time I have preached to you at Grace Church, for which, no doubt, you will get your special corner in heaven nowhere near me. And I confess that after all of these many, many times, the thrill has not gone. The excitement and anticipation of the opening of the Word of God is still there. It's as if I never did it before every time I do it because the process of discovery and communication of God's truth is so thrilling to my heart. And believe me, it's a great, great joy to come Sunday by Sunday and see folks coming as you come to hear the Word of God.

We're looking at Romans 2 verses 17 to 29, the second half of this great second chapter. I doubt that we'll get through the whole second half. You probably doubt that, too. But we'll get a running start.

Romans 2:17 to 29 deals with false security, false security. The word "security" is a word we all understand. It hits us where we live. Everybody wants security. We seek that comfortable sense of freedom that comes when we are confident there is no threat of danger or trouble. That is security, the absence of threat, the absence of fear, the absence of danger, that comfortable freedom that says everything is under control. People talk about economic security; they want to have enough stashed away so that they're really set and in no financial danger at all. They want to have job security. They want to get a job which offers to them a future, which gives to them a certain guarantee that they're not going to be out on the street.

They want marital security, the confidence that they are loved and beloved by a trusted, faithful partner. People want even home security. And so they put bars on their windows and burglar alarms and buy big, ugly dogs that growl at mailmen. And frankly the kids sometimes are more threatening than the dogs.

You see, everybody wants security. Frankly, insecurity is a killer because insecure people tend to have psychological, emotional, personality problems; very difficult to live in this world without a sense of security, a sense of well-being. The dictionary says to be secure is to be free from and not exposed to danger. To be free from any apprehension, any fear, any worry or any doubt; you just want to make sure everything is set so you fear nothing.

And I think particular men also look for spiritual security. To be free from anxiety about death, to be free from apprehension about facing God, about divine judgment, to be free from the fear that your sins are going to be brought up and held against you.

Now we can find a certain measure of economic security by diversifying our investments or by having a big sock somewhere in the closet. We can gain a certain amount of job security by having long-term contracts negotiated by a union, or by being married to the boss' daughter or any assortment of other secure factors. We can find a measure of marital security by devotedness and love. We can find a certain amount of security in our homes by arming the house or getting a dog or a wall or whatever it is that makes us feel secure. But most people are hard-pressed to find any kind of spiritual security. And yet there is a tremendous pressure on people to try to find some way to secure themselves so they don't live under the fear of death and the fear of judgment.

People don't like to talk about nuclear war. They don't like to talk about the end of the world. They don't like to talk about facing a holy God, standing before the divine throne to be judged. They want to be confident that there's not going to be a damnation, they're not going to be sent to hell. So everybody has to deal with this one way or another.

Now men know that God will judge their sin. Chapter 1 verse 32 says that even the pagan, immoral man who lives under the curse of a reprobate mind knows the judgment of God, that they who commit such things are worthy of death. I believe it is innate in man to have a sense of right and wrong. And where he understands wrong there is guilt, and guilt is a sort of a trigger that sets off fear in the face of judgment. In other words, you've done something wrong, you're going to be judged for it, so you feel guilty about it, and consequently afraid. I believe men live in fear of the consequence of their sin. They know there's going to be a judgment. And so, in some way or another they have to deal with that element of security.

Now in Romans 2, Paul speaks specifically, verses 17 to 29, to destroy the false securities of the Jews. But in so doing he also lays bare the inadequacy of many false securities of people today, and we'll see some very interesting parallels. Now Paul has already indicted the pagan, immoral, irreligious people in chapter 1 verses 18 to 32. And then he indicted the religious, moral people in chapter 2 verses 1 to 16, and the Jews were also sort of included there. But now, having dealt with irreligious people and generally religious people, he now zeroes in specifically on the covenant people, the Jews, in verses 17 to 29 so that he really is just sort of embracing everybody. He catches the pagan, the moral person and the covenant people, the Jew, and all of them are brought to the

tribunal, as it were, to be told that they are sinful and they come short of God's glory. Nobody escapes.

But in verses 17 to 29 he deals with the people who had the highest and the greatest privilege. And the people who at the same time felt themselves the most secure. And he devastates their false securities. And may I hasten to add that it is an act of great kindness. You do people a tremendous favor when you tell them that their security is insecure, when you tell them that they are putting their money in a bank that'll break, when you tell them that they're holding onto a rope that will snap. That's kindness. And so Paul is very honest and very forthright and he is very gracious in so indicting the Jew because he makes him face the inadequacy of his false securities.

Now in these verses, 17 to 29, we face the fact that the Jew had three great privileges which gave him a false sense of security. One was that he was a part of the nation of Israel. Two, that he possessed the law of God. And three, that he was circumcised. So, based on the nation and the law and the sign of circumcision, the Jew, having these great privileges, felt himself greatly secured by them, and believed that, because he was a Jew, because he possessed the law, because he had the symbol or the sign of the covenant in circumcision, he was therefore free from any fear about judgment. And so what Paul does, beginning in verse 17, is take each of these three and systematically destroy them all as securities. He strikes a killing blow at the supposed security of the Jew. And in so doing he strikes a killing blow at the supposed security of many so-called Christians and so-called religious people in the church today.

My prayer is not only that you'll understand the passage so you understand the Jew, but my prayer is that you'll understand the passage so you'll understand even in a contemporary setting in the church how people can hide behind false security, and that needs to be made known to them.

So Paul then, moved by the Holy Spirit, under inspiration, as he writes Romans begins to attack directly the covenant people in verse 17 and you see for the first time the word "Jew." He really zeroes in and he shatters the walls of their security and exposes them as they attempted to hide behind them.

Now let me give you a footnote at this point. This is necessary — now mark this — in any adequate presentation of the gospel because basically everybody has built up some sense of security, of false security, every unregenerate person. You have to, to maintain your sanity. Some people's security is in the fact that they don't believe God could do anything to them because they're good people, right? I mean, they've done a lot of good deeds. That's a very common thing. Most people have the

impression that someday they're going to come to the judgment, if there is a judgment, God's going to weigh the good and the bad, if you come out with more good than bad, you're okay. Some people have a false security based on the fact that they don't believe there is a God, and that's the way they deal with it; there never will be a judgment, they just will never face it. But everybody will inevitably put up some kind of wall to hide behind because nobody can live without a sense of security in the face of death and judgment. Everybody has it. So that at any presentation of the gospel, it is basic that first of all, before you can introduce them to the true security, you've got to attack their false one. And that's why in an approach like we use with our discipleship evangelism, the first question you ask a person is this, what right do you have to (What?) enter heaven? Why do you ask them that? You ask them that for a very simple reason, they probably have an answer. They have some...some belief or some attitude or something that makes them feel like they're going to make it. That's the only way they can survive. They're going to say, "Well, I've been to church." Or, "I mean, I'm a basically, I'm a good person." "I love my husband. I like my kids. I don't kick cats. I do a fair day's work...I mean." Some way or another people have built some wall and so you have to attack that.

Now Jesus is the perfect model of this. Jesus arrived in the scene in Judaism in Matthew. First time He gave a sermon, chapter 5 through 7, He spends the entire sermon literally demolishing the walls of Judaism. First of all, He says in chapter 5 verse 20, "Your righteousness is not adequate to get you into the Kingdom." There goes that security. Then He says, "Your attitudes are wrong. Your view of Scripture is wrong. Your human relationships are inadequate. Your words are inadequate. Your praying doesn't cut it. Your fasting doesn't cut it. Your giving doesn't cut it." And literally, in Matthew chapters 5, 6 and 7, Jesus strips Judaism threadbare naked without securities. And that is the approach that you always have to take in a presentation of the gospel. The person has to be led to the place where they know they have no resource, they have no protection, they have no hope, they have no solution, they have no security. So we are not surprised to see Paul do this.

Now, of course, there are the pagans, and you do run across them, who don't care at all. And their security is that they just don't believe anything. And then you have the moral people in the first 16 verses, and their security is their self- righteousness, isn't it, and their religiosity. And now you come to the Jew and, boy, they're really... They have theirs nailed down. They're Jews, they possess the law of God, and they are the covenant people as indicated by the sign of circumcision. Now how much more secure can you get than that? But Jesus said it is just those kind of people who are going to show up at the judgment; they're going to say, Matthew 7, "Lord, Lord, it's us and we've done all this in Your name." And He'll say to them, “Depart from Me, I never knew you.” Who are you? I have no ongoing love relationship with you. And their security will be shattered.

Now the Jews had a tendency to boast about their privileges, about their advantages, about their blessings. In fact they were incessantly boasting about that. And they did so as a sort of a reinforcement of their sense of security. And so Paul attacks directly their boasting.

Let's first of all look at their security of heritage, heritage. I want you to put that word down: Heritage. Because there are a lot of people who think their heritage is their security. Verse 17, "But if thou art called a Jew and resteth (or relies) in the law and makest thy boast (or thy bragging) of God..." And we'll stop right there.

Literally the verse begins, "Now if you call yourself a Jew." There are three words that are indicative of these people. They could be called Hebrews. The word "Hebrew" basically indicates their language. They could be called Israelites. That basically indicates their land, the land in which they live. Although that was given as a very special name it came to be identified with their land, the land of Israel. Or they could be called Jews, and that indicates their nationality. And that is the unique point of their pride. There is pride in their language, there is pride in their land but there is particular pride in their nationality. And that was true in Paul's time. The name "Jew" is first used in the Old Testament in 2 Kings 16:6 and became a frequently used title for these people, both during and after the exile. The term “Jew” spoke of nationality, of race, of heritage. It spoke of their distinctiveness from all the other nations, from all the Gentiles. It was the mark of their uniqueness to be a Jew. There might be other people in the land and there might be other people that spoke the language, but a Jew was the unique people of God. And so it became a title of honor. It designated them as the special people of God. The word even came from a Hebrew root meaning “praised.” They were named “praised” because of the tremendous privileges that they had.

And so, when you called yourself a Jew, there was a bragging there, there was a boasting there. They were saying, in effect, by using the term, that we're better than everybody else. It's interesting how things have changed. And nowadays they choose to call themselves Israelis because they identify more with the land and the political aspect than they do the Abrahamic identity. And I think that is partly due to the fact that through the history of their tremendous oppression, the term Jew was used against them with a bad connotation, with disdain. And it sort of never has recovered its honor and dignity.

And so, Paul identifies the fact that they are proud to call themselves Jews. They were bragging about it. For them it meant they were better than everybody else. You see, that was really a basic problem among them. God had called this people and said, "You go to the world and you take the message to them." But they were so proud about who they were and the uniqueness of their

relationship to God that they didn't want to tell anybody. And that's why Jonah didn't want to go to Nineveh; he didn't want any Gentiles horning in on Jewish faith. They began to sort of love their exclusiveness and they turned within themselves.

Now I'm not saying there's anything wrong with national pride and it's not wrong that they should feel proud about who they were. Mordecai, for example, in Esther 3:4 proudly said, "I am a Jew. I am a Jew." And there was something very special and very lovely and very honorable about Esther, who was a Jew. But it was the spirit in which it was said that was the issue. Mordecai, when he said, "I am a Jew" was not saying, "I am a Jew and thus I'm superior to everybody." He was saying, "I am a Jew and oh how gracious and good is God to have so blessed me." That's different, isn't it? It would be like saying, "Well, I'm a Christian and that makes me better than everybody else." As opposed to saying, "I'm a Christian, and isn't it wonderful that God was so good to me that He should make me a Christian?" See, it was attitude.

And so, with the most part, by the time you get to Paul's time, the Jew is no longer seeing his Jewishness as a revelation of God's goodness and God's grace, but he is seeing it as an indicator of his own superiority. They felt they were superior. And we believe this is the proper way to perceive this because of verse 17, where it says they make their boast of God. They were boasting. They were bragging about their unique identity. There's nothing wrong with making a boast about God. Paul said, "I will glory in Him. I will brag about Him," if you will, if it's in the right manner and for the right intention and with the right motive. There was a rightful way to boast in God. And I have every right, don't I, to stand up and say, "I submit to you that God is the greatest God there is," and I would make my boast in Him. That's very different than saying, "I've got a God that you don't have."

John Murray writes that the apostles should have referred to this in connection with what is by implication an indictment: "Demonstrates perhaps more than any other prerogative enumerated how close lies the grossest vice to the highest privilege and how the best can be prostituted to the service of the worst." End quote. Good statement. The best to be a Jew, the best to have God as your God. The worst, to think because you're a Jew you're superior and to think because you have God you are some special kind of person that God is sort of obligated to.

Now the term for boast is used many times by Paul. The word group from which it comes is a very familiar one. It sometimes is used for God-centered glorying, and sometimes for man-centered boasting. And I think the indictment character of this passage indicates that it should be here seen as their boasting, the self-confident boasting of a man who thinks that God owes him something because he's superior to everybody else. They were bragging about their relationship with God. So special

were they, so great were they that God had to favor them.

And the effect of this — and this really was their attitude, you see it over and over again even in the minor prophets — but the effect of this was that they thought they could live their life any way they wanted and everything would turn out okay because God was obligated to them because they were so superior to everybody else. And in Micah 3:11 it talks about the leaders judging for reward, that is being bribed, priests teaching for money, prophets divining for money. Here they are; they have literally corrupted all of the sacred systems. The judges can be bribed, the priests are in it for the money, the prophets do... to say whatever you want them to say if you pay them. And yet they lean on the Lord and say, "Is not the Lord among us? No evil shall come upon us." In other words, they could live with any kind of sin they wanted, they could do anything they pleased, license was theirs, but because they were Jews, God was obligated to them. That was their attitude. They felt secure as the children of Abraham. I mean, after all, in Revelation... or rather in Genesis chapter 12 it says, "And I'll bring up this people." Right? "And they'll be numbered as the sand of the sea and the stars of heaven and I will bless them and I will bless them that bless them and curse him that curseth thee." God promises His blessing to that people. He reiterates that promise to all the patriarchs. We're the blessed. We're secure. God is our God and we have monopolized Him. And He will favor us because we're superior. So they were secure in their heritage. They thought they could live any way they wanted to live and they would be okay.

The great illustration of this is found in the eighth chapter of John, if you'll turn to it a moment. I want to spend a little bit of time looking at it, John 8:31. Now Jesus, as very commonly we find Him, is confronting the Jews. And the term Jews in verse 31 in the gospel of John primarily has reference to the Jewish leaders or the Jews as duly constituted in their representative heads, their leaders. So Jesus says to the Jews who believed on Him, in other words, there was some kind of superficial assent to the fact that He was who He claimed to be. He says, "If you continue in My word you'll prove yourselves to be real followers." I mean, I know you're showing Me something now, but if you continue, you'll show yourself to be true and you'll know the truth and so forth. The truth will make you free.

He makes the statement, "The truth will make you free." Well that immediately angered them because that just began to take a shot at their security. They said, verse 33, "We're Abraham's seed and have never been in bondage to any man." Now that is an absolutely ridiculous statement. At the very minute they said that, to whom were they in bondage? The Roman Empire. Prior to that, it was the Greeks. Prior to that it was the Medo-Persians and prior to that it was the Babylonians and prior to that it was the Egyptians. I mean, they had been in bondage to everybody. But that shows how they were blinded to reality. They say, "We have never been in bondage to any man," and they may be,

granted, they may be speaking of the sort of the spiritual internal thing. We are Abraham's seed. Nobody can really get to us. What do You mean, “You shall be made free?” What are you talking about? We are free. You see, they really loved their supposed freedom. They exulted in the liberty they believed they had. They were so secure as Abraham's seed, they could do anything they wanted. They could live any way they wanted to live no matter what was going on around them. Boy, they were secure. They feel that because they have a heritage from Abraham they have unbroken liberty.

Jesus said to them, verse 34, "Well for one thing, whosoever commits sin is the servant of sin." So for one thing, I'll just tell you you're not free because you're slaves of sin. And, "The slave abides not in the house forever, but the son does." In other words, He's saying, you think you're sons of Abraham but I'm telling you you're slaves to sin and a slave doesn't live in the house forever, only a son does. So you make think you're sons of Abraham but I'm telling you you're slaves of sin.

Well, that didn't go over real big. He added this in verse 36, "However, if the son makes you free, you will be really free.” I would offer you the freedom you think you have but don't have. “I know," He says in 37, "that you're Abraham's seed, I know physically that, but you seek to kill Me because My word has no place in you. I speak that which I have seen with My Father and ye do that which you have seen with your father." And now the thing really gets down to the nitty-gritty. He says, if you were really Abraham's seed, the implication is in verse 37, what in the world are you doing killing Me? I'm Abraham's seed, too. Not only that, I am the Messiah. But I'm telling you, I have one Father and you have another one. And boy, they answered and said, in verse 39, "’Abraham is our father.’ And Jesus said unto them, ‘If you were really Abraham's children," in other words, if you were true Jews spiritually, if you were the real thing, "you would do the works of Abraham, but now you seek to kill Me, a man that hath told you the truth which I've heard of God and this did not Abraham." If you were truly the seed of Abraham, you'd act like Abraham acted and Abraham didn't go around killing the people who had a message from God.

And then He says, "You do the deeds of your father." And He still hasn't told them who their father is yet. But they said to Him, well You must mean a Gentile, but we're not born out of fornication, we have one father, even God. And Jesus said, “If God were your father you'd love Me for I proceed forth and came from God, neither came I of Myself but He sent Me. Why do you not understand My speech? Even because you can't hear My word. You're blinded and made deaf." And then here it comes, "Ye are of your father the devil."

Now, people, you can't get any more dramatic than that. And you can't get any more confrontive than that. You think you're secure because you are physically coming from Abraham? I'm telling you you are not the true seed of Abraham spiritually. Spiritually your father is the devil. Why? Because he is a murderer and you're seeking to murder Me and he is a liar and your whole system is made up of lies. You betray your true father. Later on they said, "You've got a demon, fella."

And if that wasn't bad enough at the end of the chapter, in verse 56, He says, "Your physical father Abraham rejoiced to see My day and saw it and was glad." In other words, you prove that you're only physically descended from him. You're not spiritual because you don't perceive what he perceived. "And the Jews said unto Him, ‘You're not even 50 years old, how have You seen Abraham?'" And then He says, "Verily verily I say unto you, before Abraham was, I am." Oh, that's when they lost it. And they started picking up rocks. Why? Because they thought He blasphemed God by saying He was eternal, which made Him equal with God, and they tried to stone Him. But He slipped away.

What did Jesus do in John 8? I'll tell you what He did, very simple. They thought they were spiritually secure because they were of the seed of Abraham. Jesus attacked that security and He said, you are physically from Abraham but spiritually your father is the devil. And it isn't the physical that matters, it is the spiritual. So Jesus is literally destroying their security in John chapter 8, the security of their heritage.

John the Baptist did this before Jesus did it. I think this is one of the most remarkable things. In Matthew 3, you don't need to turn to it, John is out by the Jordan and he's that rough-tough guy and he's preaching the kingdom and he's baptizing these people. And here comes the Pharisees and the Sadducees and they come up to him and this is his greeting, "O generation of snakes, who warned you to flee from the wrath to come?" Who sent you snakes out here? And then he says, "If your coming is legitimate, bring forth fruits befitting repentance." And then he says this, "And don't you think within yourselves, we have Abraham as our father." Why did he say that to them? Because that was forever their security. He says, don't you tell yourself that you're okay because Abraham is your father. I'm saying to you that God is able out of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. That's no big deal. Don't hide behind that.

Now you can go back to Romans 2 and you find that Paul is just doing what John the Baptist and Jesus did; same approach. You see, very tightly the Jews clung to the false security of their heritage. And it had to be exploded.

Now you say, "What does that say to us?" I think there are a lot of people like that today who are holding onto some Christian heritage. They're assuming that because they live in a country with Christian roots they're Christian. This is not only true in our country but in a lot of countries. You know, if you go to an Arab country and you ask the question, are you a Christian? It will be amazing how many people will say “yes,” because you're either a Moslem or a Christian. You're either attached to Moslem faith or you're attached to some kind of eastern Orthodox faith. And I can't remember how many, many different Arab people I've met in my limited travels in the Middle East and I said to them, "Well, are you Moslem?" "No, I'm a Christian." And it took me a while to find out that that didn't mean they were a Christian. That just meant they weren't a Moslem. And if you're not a Moslem you've got to be something, so they call you a Christian because you have to be identified in some sense with even the Orthodox eastern church. And their hope is strictly on the basis that they fit into a family that is traditionally eastern Orthodox as opposed to Moslem.

And we have that in our country. There are people who think they're saved because their parents were Christians. Or they attended church as a child, or they're religious. And they have a sense of security because of some Christian heritage or some Christian roots. Let me see if I can just pursue this for your thinking. And I want to be very fair about what I say and yet I think it's a major issue.

In America there are many churches that come under the term "Covenant Church,” “Reformed Church," and many of them are very good. But in some of them there is a teaching along the line of what we would call, I guess, for lack of a better term, family covenant, that the salvation of the child occurs because he is born to Christian parents. Now you may not have been able to identify that because it's not in your background but that is true of many, many Protestant backgrounds. And that is why there is what we call infant baptism. Infant baptism is simply an outward symbol of the fact that the child is within the covenant of the family. And some have even gone so far as to say even though the child cannot believe, God imputes saving faith to the child because of the parents, even at the point of infant baptism.

Zwingli...and I was just reading some of this stuff this week, Zwingli, the great reformer, took the position that all children of believers who died in infancy were saved because they were born within the covenant. He didn't feel the same about the children of unbelievers. But the children of believers were within the covenant since the promise, he said, was given to believers and their children, Acts 2:39. And, of course, he misinterpreted that verse.

John Owen, and if any of you have read John Owen, God bless you, you have waded through page after page of fine print. But John Owen was a Puritan Calvinist. He expressed the belief that such infant salvation could even be passed down from the grandparents and bypass the parents. In other words, a grandchild could be born within the covenant. I have kind of a problem with that. Why would you have to bypass the children, cause if they were born to the Christian grandparents, then they would have to be in the covenant, too. But he doesn't explain that. But he is literally saying the child can enter the covenant through the parents or through the grandparents if the parents don't cooperate. And infant baptism then conserves this covenant salvation.

I've been in parts of America where this kind of theology is fairly dominant, back in the Midwest. Parents have actually expressed the fact that even though their child is wayward and even though their child is indifferent to the cause of Christ, the child is still saved because they were born in the covenant and their salvation was affirmed in their infant baptism. And that the hope of the parent is that. Because of that, that child is secure.

Now where does this come from? The whole thing comes from taking the false security of Judaism over into Christianity. The reason for infant baptism is simply that it is a replacement basically for circumcision. It's certainly a lot easier, I would grant that. But it is a new sign of the covenant. And they believe that since we are the new Israel of God and the old Israel is forever set aside, we as the new Israel of God have our sign of identification, being born into that covenant, and that is infant baptism.

Now, of course, Roman Catholicism believes this. And I was reading this week in Ludwig Ott's book on *The Principles of Catholic Dogma*, and the Roman Catholic Church has taught through all of the centuries that infants are to be baptized, right? And that is how that infant is introduced into the covenant. The text and Ott says, "The possibility of the baptism of children flows from the objective efficacy of the sacraments." In other words, they believe there is actually gracious efficacy in the sacrament. When you baptize someone, there is a saving efficacy in that act. And so when you baptize a child, you really save that child. And they go on to talk about the fact that baptism is a part of the conferring of salvation.

And then Ott makes an interesting quote from the Roman Catholic perception as he looks at the Reformers and he says, "The Reformers, influenced by Christian tradition, retained the baptism of children. They retained it out of the Catholic system, although it is not compatible with their notions of sacraments." Because the Reformers did not believe there was actual efficacy in the sacrament, but they still maintained it.

Martin Luther, for example, sought to remove the difficulty with the assumption that infants were at the moment of baptism endowed with the ability to make an act of justifying *fiducial* faith in a miraculous manner. And according to Catholic teaching, faith, as it is not the effective cause of justification, but merely an act of disposition, does not even need to be present. Did you get that? The Roman Catholic Church says the child can be baptized unto salvation and faith doesn't have to be there. Martin Luther couldn't handle that so he says the child will be baptized unto salvation and in his infancy, when he can't reason, God will miraculously allow him to have the faith to believe by some miracle. And therefore Luther got around the problem.

The Catholic dogma says this, "The faith which the infant lacks is replaced by the faith of the church." Did you get that? In other words, the child is saved because of the faith of everybody in the church, whatever that is. You don't even have to have your own faith. That's why infant baptism is so important to them. And when the Reformation came, the Reformation had a great effect basically on soteriology, the doctrines of salvation, but it left a lot of other stuff in that should have been screened out. And one of the things that dragged in was infant baptism. And it couldn't say that the faith of the church could save that infant so it began to say God miraculously gives faith. Or, the faith of the parents is enough. Or, the faith of the grandparents is enough. And so, within Protestantism as well as Catholicism, you have people today who have the false sense of security that they are saved because of an heritage that they've received from their grandparents or their parents. That is a false security.

I'm a fifth generation preacher. Did you know that? I am the fifth generation; my father, my grandfather, and then it goes over to my grandmother and back to from Australia and Scotland they all came. And they were Presbyterians and then they were Baptists and then there was me. And nobody knows what I am. But I'm a fifth generation. But you know what that means as far as my salvation is concerned? Absolutely nothing, except this, I am more responsible than somebody perhaps who didn't have that kind of heritage because I know the truth. We are not secured by our heritage. You may have had Christian parents, you may have been born in a Christian hospital with a Christian nurse and a Christian doctor who used tools purchased from a Christian manufacturer. You may have been fed Christian baby food and don't be surprised if somebody doesn't come out with that now. We have everything else. That doesn't mean a thing. It's a matter of individual faith. But the church has been so confused by this through the years. Heritage is not a security.

All right, let me just begin to introduce the second security. We're going to develop this a lot next time, but their second false security was knowledge. And I think this is so interesting. That's also in verse

17. Well, we're going to go faster next time. But it says in verse 17... You know, this happens to me because I say things I didn't plan to say, you understand that? In verse 17 it says that you rest in the law. You lean on the law. And this is, by the way, the major portion of the passage. It runs all the way from verse 17 down to verse 24, the heart of it. This is the security in their knowledge.

Now they basically had the knowledge, no question about that. They had received the truth from God. And their confidence was that they were secure because they had that knowledge. Now there are four points that Paul makes here, what they learned, what they taught, what they did, and what they caused with that knowledge. What they learned of knowledge, what they taught of what they learned, what they did in light of knowledge and what they caused by what they did is a flow through this section.

Let's, first of all, just look at what they learned. They felt themselves secure because of what they had learned. And there are several phrases that indicate to us this aspect. First, verse 17, they rested in the law. Now this term "law" I want you to take in the widest possible perspective. I think it embraces the entire revelation of God. I think it encompasses all the Scripture. It therefore encompasses all the truth about God and His nature and His work. It encompasses all of the Mosaic system. It must incorporate the adoption and the promises and the covenants and the rites and the ceremonies and the priesthood and the sacrifices and the instructions and the legislations and the promises and the blessings and the cursings and everything else. And they had it all and they knew it all because they were instructed in it from the time of their childhood. It was a part of their upbringing to be exposed to and trained in the law.

In Nehemiah 9:13 it says, "Thou camest down also upon Mount Sinai and did speak with them from heaven and gavest them (And this is the people of God, the Jews.) right ordinances and true laws, good statutes and commandments and madest known unto them the holy Sabbath and commandedst them precepts and statutes and laws by the hand of Moses, Thy servant." And it goes on and on to talk about what God did and gave them. And so they rested, verse 17 says. They rested. The word means to rely. They relied on the law of God.

Now that could be good, couldn't it? That could be good. And if this weren't an indictment we could take it that way. But it was this: They were resting in the possession of it rather than in the keeping of it, truly. And they were resting in their own self-effort to try to maintain it. They rested totally in God's law. They had no other source of information. And they endeavored with God's law to try to keep it. Now follow this thought. They endeavored to try to keep God's law. Could they? Of course not; in fact I think God gave them some laws that were just impossible to keep just to prove that to them, and

maybe had no other purpose than just their impossibility. But they had these laws and they couldn't keep them.

So, if they couldn't get saved and justify themselves by keeping the law, there was only one other logical step. And that was just to feel that because they had the law they were secure. They couldn't get any security out of keeping the whole law because they couldn't keep it, so it just sort of deteriorated to the point where they felt that because we possess the law we're okay. We're okay because we have it. I mean, we're the people of the law. We're the people to whom God has given His truth and His Word; that makes us very special. Why, God wouldn't do anything to the people who are the caretakers of His law.

But that was never God's purpose. God's purpose was not to just give them the law and say you're okay now because you possess it. All that did was make them more responsible, right? But they didn't see that. Jeremiah 7, "The word came to Jeremiah from the Lord saying, Stand in the gate of the Lord's house and proclaim there this word and say, ‘Hear the Word of the Lord all you of Judah that enter in at these gates to worship the Lord.’" Now listen to what God says. "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel, ‘Amend your ways and your doings and I'll cause you to dwell in this place. Trust not in lying words.’" And here's what they would say, saying. “The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord, the temple of the lord"

In other words, they were just saying, "Hey, here is the temple, it's the temple of the Lord and it's in our midst and that means God is on our side and everything's okay." Don't keep saying that, he says. Don't just keep saying everything's okay because God is here and His temple is here and — implied — His law is here. "You thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, you thoroughly execute justice, you stop oppressing the sojourner, the fatherless and the widow and stop shedding innocent blood and stop walking after other gods to your harm and then I'll cause you to dwell in this place in the land that I gave your fathers forever and ever." You see, it wasn't just possessing, it was obeying.

And then they also went a step further. Verse 18, they were boasting about resting in the law and about knowing God's will. We know God's will. We're okay. Boy, that is shallow, isn't it? Because to know God's will doesn't mean anything except you’re more responsible, again, if you don't do it. Literally the Greek text: "And knowest the will," the will, the will par excellence, the supreme will, which is, of course, the will of God. And that's right. If they possess the law of God they possess the will of God because His will is made manifest in His revelation. They knew what God required, they knew what God forbid, they knew what God commanded, they knew what God prohibited. They knew what God approved and they knew what God disapproved. They knew what He rewarded and they

knew what He punished. They knew His will. The Psalmist said, "He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel and He hath not dealt so with any other nation," Psalm 147. And so God had revealed His will over and over. Throughout the revelation came His will. So they were right on target. They had the law and they had in that law the will of God.

Thirdly, they had also learned to approve the things that are more excellent. And this is discernment. First they had the revelation. The revelation gave the will of God and the knowledge of the will of God gave them the ability to discern what was right or wrong. So the progression is very obvious. Dokimaz is the word “to approve.” It means to put something to the test for the purpose of approving. They were able to test things. They were able to approve things. Literally, it says they approve the things that are more excellent. The Greek word really means “they approve.” Or I guess a better way to say it is they test the difference in things. In other words, they can discern right and wrong. They know God's will. Therefore they know what's right, they know what's wrong, they know what's good, they know what's bad. And the law gave them that knowledge.

And then fourthly, verse 18 again says, "They were instructed out of the law." And this is the word *katech* from which we get catechism. You know that word? And catechism is a method of instruction where you repeat back and forth questions and answers. That's how they were taught. They were catechized. So they received the law of God, and in that law they could discern God's will. And consequently they could decide what was right and what was wrong. And they knew it well because they had been catechized, that is to teach something orally by repetition. They had had a formal home and synagogue training. They had all this, that is, what they had learned. And so they felt secure. They had a great knowledge. I mean, they knew that whole system.

I will never forget, I don't think as long as I live, the rabbi, the Orthodox rabbi who spoke at that conference in Milwaukee some weeks back. To me it was incredible all of the Old Testament that that man knew. He just went on and on and on and on about the Old Testament. The Jew knew the Old Testament. It was common for them to know the Old Testament. Every Jewish boy would have been trained up in the law and he would have been able to know the will of God and he would have been able to discern right and wrong and he would have been catechized. All that privilege! But how ridiculous to boast that you’re secure because you have that knowledge, because you know the truth, if you do absolutely nothing about it.

Later on in the book of Romans, in the ninth chapter, I think that's really where Paul is coming from when he says in chapter 9 at the very beginning, he says, "My heart is continually sorrowful for the sake of Israel." Why? They have the adoption, they have the glory, they have the covenants, they

have the law, they have the service, they have the promise, they have the fathers, they even have had Christ to come, but I sorrow. Why? Because all of that doesn't mean a thing if you don't respond in obedience. And at the end of the ninth chapter, verse 31, he says, "Israel followed after the law of righteousness but never attained the law of righteousness." Why? Because they sought it not by faith but by works. They sought through their own self-righteousness to fulfill it.

So, it really is a greater judgment that they receive by having the knowledge of the law. That's what 2:12 in Romans is saying. If you sin in the law, you're going to be judged by the law and that's much more severe.

So, what we see then is that the Jews had these two basic securities: heritage, knowledge. And Paul begins to tear that apart. Now there's a lot more to say about knowledge but let me just draw it to a conclusion. There are a lot of people in that same category, because they know the Bible, because they know of what it teaches, because they understand maybe what God's will is, because they have the capacity therefore to know what right and wrong is and maybe to live a sort of a moral life, because maybe they've been raised in a Christian family where they've been instructed, maybe they've even gone to a Christian school, maybe even gone to a Christian college, been taught in a church. They feel themselves secure because they have that knowledge.

Listen, the deepest pit of hell is reserved for the people who know the most and never by faith appropriate it, severe. That is no security. You can know everything there is to know about Christianity, turn your back on Jesus Christ and walk away and yours is the severest condemnation. Knowledge is no security, none at all; neither is your heritage.

You say, "What is the security?" Well the whole point of Romans 1, 2 and 3 is simply this, and I'll let the cat out of the bag right here, you've got no security in anything until you get into chapter 3 in the middle and you meet Jesus Christ. And the whole point of the first three chapters is to strip everybody of all their supposed securities so that you have nothing, and you cast yourself on Christ in faith. That's where we're going. But in the process we must understand that these are not securities on which we can bank our eternal destiny. Let's pray together.

Our Father, we thank You that we've just begun to study tonight and have sensed Your Spirit teaching us. We thank You for the clarity and the consistency of Your Word, that the message of Paul was the message of Jesus was the message of John the Baptist. We stand in that same line, desiring before we can present Christ to strip men bare of their false security. Pagan man, secure in his

agnosticism, secure in his atheism; religious man secure in his morality, secure in his religiosity, secure in his ritual; and even the man with the right religious identification, the Jew, or in our case the Christian church, who is secure in his own mind because of his heritage or because of his knowledge. Father, we pray that we might see the diminishing and the disintegration of any of those false securities that might be in the hearts of any of us tonight, that we might see ourselves as utterly devoid of anything that can stay the hand of divine judgment and cast ourselves upon the saving mercy of Christ, who alone is our security.

Thank You for our wonderful fellowship tonight. We would pray as we think about the little children that each of them would come to the place in their life where personally they come to Jesus Christ as their only security, and that the faith which we now hold in their midst might become their own, that we who are parents might never give them the sense of security in their heritage or their knowledge, but that they may know they too need Christ. If there's anyone here tonight, Lord, that needs to make that commitment to Christ, we pray that tonight would be the night and we'll thank You for His sake. Amen.

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