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

False Security, Part 2
Scripture: Romans 2:19-29
Code: 45-23

Our study tonight takes us back to the second chapter of Romans again. And we are excited and encouraged about the things the Lord has prepared for us tonight. Romans chapter 2: Some have called the book of Romans the Magna Carta of the Christian faith, perhaps the greatest document stating the gospel of Jesus Christ in all of the New Testament. And we're going through it verse by verse and being enriched as we do.

We find ourselves now in the section from chapter 2, verse 17 through 29. Now this section does not stand alone, but is part of a larger section beginning in chapter 1 verse 18 and running all the way to chapter 3, verse 20. And the purpose of that entire section from 1:18 through 3:20 is to point out that man is a sinner and man stands before God without resources, without any means of salvation or security.

Now as we learned last week, the Jews believed that they were absolutely secure with God. They believed that they would never face final condemnation, they would never really face ultimate judgment. The apostle Paul has already written to the pagan, immoral, irreligious man to show his guilt in chapter 1. He's already written to the religious, moral, man to show his guilt in the first part of chapter 2. And now he zeroes particularly in on the Jew who feels himself so very secure, and Paul's design here is to destroy his false security.

I suppose at first thought we might assume that that was cruel, that to take away a man's security is something very cruel. But that's just the opposite of the truth, because the man who has a false security needs to know how false it really is. If you had spent your life savings to purchase an insurance policy to protect you and your wife and your family and someone came to you and said, "Look, I want to tell you something, no such company exists, the whole thing is a fraud," you wouldn't say to the man, "Leave me alone, will you? I'm happy in my false security. I was content until you got here, now you've messed up everything." No, you'd thank the man and say, "Show me the evidence," and if the man was right you'd be so deeply grateful because then you could pursue a true security.

That's essentially what Paul is doing. He is exploding the myth of Jewish false security in order that they might be brought to the point of true and genuine security. Now they felt themselves secure

before God and they felt that some day they would go to heaven and enter the kingdom. They felt that they would never be judged or punished or condemned for three basic reasons. And these were the basic elements of their security.

Number one was their nation. Number two was their law. And number three was their sign. Based on the nation, the part of the law they had been given, and the sign of circumcision, they felt themselves to be secure. Paul then attacks those securities and shows that they are no security at all; in fact they only serve to aggravate the condemnation that is inevitable. It is necessary to tear down people's false security in order to reveal their danger and then to offer to them the true security, faith in Christ.

I suppose a classic illustration of this would be the sinking of the Titanic. The people felt so secure that they refused to get into life, boats only to perish. When there is no security, we do people a great service to tell them that and point them to the life boat.

Now every human being — whether irreligious, religious or whether even attached to the right religion, if you will, (Judaism, or in this day Christianity) — is either secure or insecure. Most people like to feel secure, so one way or another they either find a true security in Christ or they imagine themselves to be secure by some other means. They convince themselves that they're religious. Or they convince themselves that they're good. Or they convince themselves that God wouldn't punish anybody or that there isn't even a God.

I read an interview today with a current rock star who was asked what her security was and she said, "I'm a part of the great energy cosmic force." That's her security, she's a part of the great energy cosmic force. Man basically cannot live without some security, be it real or false, be it genuine or imagined and so he will postulate something. And the Jews, of course, had taken the fact of their national heritage, the fact of the law of God, and the sign of circumcision and they said, "Look, God has chosen us as a people, God has given us His law and God has marked us out by circumcision as His people. Surely we of all are secure. And when the day comes when we stand before God, we will certainly enter into His kingdom."

Now their first security — and we want to look at it just as a reminder — was the security of heritage. Verse 17: "They called themselves Jews," and in the end of the verse, "They boasted of God." Because they belonged to the Jewish people, God was their God, they said. They were proud of their Abrahamic descent. They felt secure in their heritage. Just being a Jew meant that you were God's specially favored people and surely you would not ever be brought to judgment. In fact the rabbis had even said that no Jew would ever be thrown out of God's kingdom. That was a false security. Jesus

later on said, "The people who are the sons of the kingdom will be shut out of the kingdom and strangers will be allowed in." So just being Jewish was no security.

And we talked a little about how other people feel that their heritage may secure them. Maybe they were raised in a religious family or they have received a religious tradition, or perhaps they have gone to church. Perhaps their parents had taught them about the gospel of Christ. And perhaps they feel that because of some factor in their heritage God is obligated to them. Maybe as a child they were put through baptism and training and confirmation and so forth and so on. But heritage is no security at all.

Secondly, Paul dealt with their false security of knowledge. They believed that because they had the law of God and knew the law of God, they therefore were okay. And they boasted in that. Back in verse 17 we find, first of all, that they felt secure in the knowledge of what they'd learned. They rested in the law. And then it says in verse 18 they knew God's will. And also they approved the things that are more excellent, or they were able to discern, having been instructed out of the law. So that sort of talks about what they had learned. And on the basis of what they had learned they felt themselves secure. They had all this knowledge. They knew God's will. They were able to discern what was right and what was wrong based upon biblical principles.

And then at the end of verse 18 is where we'll pick it up. We left off last time here. They were instructed out of the law, *katech*. We get a word from that word, "catechism," or "catechized." It means to be taught something orally. And there would be this oral repetitious teaching. They had been catechized out of God's law. And as a result of that catechizing, that oral instruction they had learned in the home and also in the synagogue, they knew God's law, they knew God's will. They were able to discern what was right and what was wrong. They had tremendous knowledge of God's truth as revealed in the Old Testament. But it was all in their heads for the most part. They did not perceive that the knowledge they had was to affect the way they lived. They went on living in a sinful manner with this knowledge. In effect, they ignored it.

You know, to the Hebrew, true wisdom is to do what you know to be true. To the Greek, wisdom was just to know. To the Hebrew, wisdom was to do. And the biggest fool of all was one who knew and didn't do. And so they are fools in the classic Hebrew sense. They had all the privileges. They had all of the knowledge. And in that they felt secure. But security does not come in what you know. It comes in what you do in response to what you know. In fact again, if you don't do what you know to do, you simply wind up in a greater state of guilt.

In Romans 9:31, "Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness hath not attained to the law of righteousness." In other words, they had the law, they pursued the law, but they never caught it. They never attained it because they sought it not by faith but by the works of the law. In other words, they knew it in their minds but they never apprehended it in their hearts. and it simply meant greater judgment.

So, they felt secure in what they knew. But that is no security at all. And may I hasten to add that in the contemporary setting, what you know is not your security. You may know about Christ, you may know about the Bible, you may know about heaven and hell, you may know about the devil and God, you may know about sin, and you may know about goodness. What you know is not the issue. What you do about it is. If it remains in the head, it only becomes the basis for greater condemnation. So they were falsely secure because they knew. And God held them responsible for knowing and not doing. That's why 2:12 of Romans says, "As many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law, for it is not the hearers of the law that are just before God but the (What?) the doers." And James said, "Don't be hearers only, but doers, deceiving your own selves." You are deceived if you think just knowing is a security. It isn't. It only gives you the greater responsibility for behaving properly.

So, first of all, they felt secure in what they knew. Secondly, they felt secure in what they taught, verse 19 and 20. They felt that they had not only received it but they had taught it. And so God would certainly never pass them by. After all, they were the teachers of the law of God. Isn't God pleased with that? Wouldn't God be greatly pleased not only that they knew it but that they taught it to someone else? They considered themselves to be capable of instructing all other nations. They saw themselves as the guides and lights of the world. And in a sense they should well have been that. They should well have been the channel through which God could reach the rest of the world. They weren't in fact, but they saw themselves as those who could teach the whole world. They just really never got around to doing it properly. And as Jesus said, when they did go out to teach someone, they made of that individual more times a son of hell than he was before they got there, because all they did was dump a lot of legalism and works righteousness on the person that made him worse off than he was before he knew.

And so they really didn't fulfill that calling, but they were proud about the fact that they were teachers. Look at verse 19: Four statements describe their supposed superiority in teaching. He says, "And you are confident that you yourself are a guide of the blind." Confident has the idea of a sort of a constant state of being persuaded. You're into settled conviction. You're fixed in your mind that you are a guide of the blind. The word "guide" literally means somebody who leads a person along a path, that you

were really the kind of person who can lead people along the path to truth, people who are blind. And that has to do, of course, with intellectual, moral, spiritual ignorance. So they saw themselves as those who could guide the people who were ignorant, who could teach the untaught, the unlearned. They saw themselves as teachers of the ignorant and teachers of the inexperienced. But in Matthew 23:16 Jesus called them blind guides. And if the blind, He says, lead the blind, both fall into the ditch. They thought they were teachers. Jesus said they were anything but and were in fact leading people into the same pit that they themselves were falling into.

Secondly, they fancied themselves also, verse 19 says, to be a light of them who are in darkness. They saw themselves as a light to those in darkness. And you know it's really interesting because this is all basically what they were supposed to have been. You can go back, for example, to the first one, a guide to the blind, and you'll find in the Old Testament that Israel was to be a guide to those who could not see. They were to be a guide to the blind, to those who are in spiritual ignorance. And you'll also find in the Old Testament that they were to be a light. In Isaiah 42:6 it says, "I have appointed you as a light to the nations." They were to bring light to the darkness of the world.

Jesus reiterated that, didn't He, in the fifth chapter of Matthew, when in confronting the people of Israel He reminded them that they were the light of the world, “and a city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden, neither do men put a light under a bushel but on a lamp stand, so that it can give light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven. That was really a restatement of what their original intention was. They were to be guides to the blind, they were to lead those who were spiritually ignorant, and they were to be a light to those who were caught in the darkness of sin. That was their calling. And they thought they were able to do that. They thought they were capable of doing that. But the fact was they were condemning the very people they taught. And I quoted or alluded to a verse I'll now quote, Matthew 23:15, "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte and when he is made you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves. Woe unto you, you blind guides." You damn people. Why? Because you're not giving them the true message; giving them the message of works. It was not the purpose of the Pharisees and scribes to convert people to God, but to make a full-blown, legalistic, hair-splitting Pharisee with the same kind of fanatical zeal for works salvation that they themselves had.

Thirdly, verse 20 says they also saw themselves as instructors of the foolish. The term “instructor” there means a “corrector.” It emphasizes training or discipline. It is used in Hebrews 12:9 of a chastiser, someone who brings correction. They saw themselves as those who were to correct the foolish. And the word there has to do with senseless people, people without reason, people who can't make right decisions. And the Jews, by the way, used that very frequently to speak of Gentiles. So it

may be that he's saying, you see yourselves as those who can correct the fools, or to correct the Gentiles and put them in line and train them and discipline them properly.

And then fourthly, you see yourselves as teachers of babes. And that word simply means infants. It is used in the New Testament to speak of sort of baby Christians. It is used to speak of Jews who are infantile in their understanding. And here it is probably used of Jewish proselytes. It's a term that was commonly used by the Jews to speak of those who were entering into Judaism from a Gentile background. And so they felt capable to instruct the converts from paganism. And because they had learned the law, verse 17 and 18, because they had taught the law, verse 19 and 20, they felt that they were secure. At the end of verse 20 he says, "You have the form of knowledge and the truth in the law." And that really was their confidence. Because you rest in the law, verse 17, because you have the form of knowledge and the truth in the law, in the middle, you think you're okay.

The word "form" by the way is of interest, I think. It has to do with the idea of a sketch or a scheme or an outline or a framework. It's only used here and in 2 Timothy 3:5 where you have a form of godliness without power. And that's exactly what they had. They had a sketch or a structure or a framework or an outline or a scheme of things. But they didn't have the full content. They lacked the substance. But they felt secure in their knowledge.

Now Paul kind of turns the corner on them here. The rabbis had said that — now listen to this — studying the law is equal to keeping the law. That's what they said. Paul says that's not true. And in effect he says, "Let me tell you how I perceive your relation to the law." They said, we are secure because of what we've learned and what we've taught. Paul says you're insecure, first of all, because of what you did, and secondly, because of what you caused.

Let's look at what they did, verse 21. And here really is the sequel to verse 17. You rest in the law. You make your boast of God. In other words, you're claiming security because you are Jewish and because you possess the law. But the fact is, "Thou therefore who teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?" In other words, if you make all of these claims of what you know and what you teach, do you do those things? Because the issue is not what you know, it's what you do. It's not what you teach, it's what you do. I would venture to say that this country is full of people who teach Christian truth who will never enter God's kingdom. I mean, the country is loaded with angels of light, or those disguised, I should say, as angels of light, false teachers, false prophets, who under the guise of true prophets and true shepherds are teaching. And sometimes perhaps they even teach the truth to gain their own ends.

And I think there are other people who may be teaching the law of God, teaching principles out of the Bible, teaching things out of the Scripture. But it is not what they teach, it is what they do. And here you find the terrible gulf between what theologians call orthodoxy and orthopraxy, between profession and practice. And Paul says, in fact, you're guilty of what you condemn in other people. You're a teacher and you don't even live up to your own lessons. You're like a crooked cop, somebody out there under the pretense of upholding the law, all the time breaking it. You're like an unjust judge, somebody who sits on the bench with the task of rendering justice, and living out injustice. The worst kind of hypocrisy is this kind of hypocrisy. They pretended and they did not obey. And so he really indicts them there in a very simple way.

Back to Psalm 50 verse 16 and here is another indictment of similar nature. "But unto the wicked, God said, What hast thou to do to declare My statutes or that thou shouldest take My covenant in thy mouth?" I mean what in the world are you bothering with My law for, why are you taking it in and giving it out? Why are you so wrapped up in My law, seeing you hate instruction and you cast My words behind you? What is this big external preoccupation with My law when you won't even abide by it?

And he gives an illustration. "When you saw a thief, then you consented with him and have been partaker with adulterers. Thou givest thy mouth to evil and thy tongue frameth deceit, thou sittest and speakest against thy brother, thou slanderest thine own mother's son. These things hast thou done and I kept silence. Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself but I will reprove thee and set them in order before thine eyes. Now consider this, ye who forget God, lest I tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver." Now I think you get the point.

What good does it do to teach something you don't live? And Jesus gave the same basic indictment to the Pharisees, didn't He, in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. For he said, "They say and do not.” They say and do not. And so he says in verse 21, "Thou, therefore, who teachest another, teacheth thou not thyself?" I mean, while you're teaching everybody else, have you been teaching yourself? And then he picks out three illustrations, "Thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? Thou that abhorest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?” Or literally, rob temples? Three things, theft, adultery and sacrilege; theft, adultery and sacrilege, and those are just illustrations of sins that apparently were rather common among the Jewish people.

Look at the first one in verse 21. You preach against stealing, do you steal? Now I just want to remind you that in case you wondered, they did steal and that's why this illustration is so apt. And I'm not going to take the time to show you all the multiple ways in which they stole, but they stole. And you can go all the way back in their history to the fifty-sixth chapter of Isaiah. It says, "Israel's watchmen are blind, they are ignorant, they are dumb dogs, they can't bark, they sleep, they lie down, they love to slumber." How would you like to have a watchdog like that? That's the watchman. "They are greedy dogs, they can never have enough, they are shepherds that can't understand. They all look to their own way, everyone for his gain from his quarter." In other words, they are in it for everything they can squeeze out of it.

Isaiah speaks of the robbery and the extortion, as do many of the other minor prophets. That was true of the people of God before they were judged. In the twenty-second chapter of Ezekiel and verse 12 it says, "In thee have they taken gifts to shed blood." That's bribery. "Thou hast taken interest and increase and hast greedily gained of thy neighbors by extortion and hast forgotten Me, saith the Lord God," Ezekiel 22:12. And you can look at Amos chapter 8 and get the same thing, verse 4. They swallowed up the needy. They made the poor of the land to fail. And it goes on to say they would buy the poor for silver and the needy for a pair of shoes and sell the refuse of the wheat. They robbed. They robbed each other. Malachi 3 says they robbed God by not bringing their tithes into the storehouse.

It was characteristic of them that they were thieves. Now it is not only true of those in the past generation but even the generation to which our Lord came, to which the apostle Paul wrote. When Jesus came into the temple the first time to cleanse the temple, He said, "My Father's house is to be a house of prayer but you have made it a (What?), a den of (What?) thieves." They were in there ripping people off from top to bottom. It was a way of life with them, cheating them on the exchange of money, cheating them on the sale of sacrificial animals. In the twenty-third chapter again, that scathing denunciation of the Pharisees in Matthew 23, Jesus says in verse 14, "You devour widows' houses." They literally extorted people, robbed from people.

And so Paul is saying the same thing to them that Jesus said, that the Old Testament prophets said, "You have the law but what good does that do when you don't obey the law? You preach against stealing and then you go around stealing."

Secondly, "You say," verse 22, "you shouldn't commit adultery and then you commit adultery." You say, "Did they commit adultery?" Oh, did they ever; they tried to legitimize it. Go back to Matthew 5

and I'll show you how. And these are just illustrations so we don't want to spend a lot of time on them. We kind of lose the flow if we do. But in Matthew 5:27 Jesus said, "You have heard it said by them of old (In other words, your tradition says.) you shall not commit adultery." That's what you've been taught, don't commit adultery. And in your legalism, of course, you've tried to kind of abide by that. "But I'm telling you if you look on a woman to lust after her, you've committed adultery with her already in your heart."

So, in other words, you say not to commit adultery, you teach people don't commit adultery, and then you go around committing adultery in your heart all over the place. And they did, you know. There's one thing about legalism, folks, legalism has no ability to restrain sin. It can't. All it does is intensify it. Anybody caught up in a legalistic system where they're trying to gain God's favor by their own works finds themselves utterly unable to restrain their evil flesh. And so they were not committing adultery outwardly but inwardly they were really committing adultery.

Then He went a step further, verse 31: “They said, ‘Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement.’" Now what that means is if you're going to divorce your wife, just do the paperwork. That's all. You can divorce her if you want, just do the paperwork. Why were they doing that? Why were they divorcing their wife? Because it was a way out of adultery. If they fell in love with another woman or if they saw another woman they wanted, instead of committing adultery, they’d just divorced their wife and marry her. And so they were multiplying their wives to avoid technically adultery, which constituted adultery. As Jesus says in verse 32, when you put away your wife without the cause of fornication, you cause everybody to commit adultery, so don't tell Me you're not adulterers, you're adultering all over the place, in your mind and in your multiple marriages. They were adulterous. They were teaching against it and they were living against the thing they taught.

I received a letter from a young man recently who said that he was assistant pastor in a church of a man who preached a very hard-line, straight and narrow, fundamentalist, legalistic message. He believed in the gospel of Christ. He demanded a certain kind of a hair length. He demanded a certain kind of music and all of these kinds of things. And then recently was asked to leave his church because he had had adultery with seven different women. He didn't live his message. He lived an absolute contradiction to everything he taught.

You can't be secure just because you teach it. You can't be secure just because you know it. The only real security comes in doing it. And then the third illustration he gives in verse 22 is interesting. You hate idols, and that of course was definitely of the Lord. The Lord said no other gods and so forth. "You say you hate idols and you commit sacrilege."

The Jews supposedly abhorred — that's what the word means, and the word means to turn away from something because of its stench. You literally can't stand the stench of idols, you say, you teach against idolatry and yet you commit sacrilege. And the literal Greek word there is “you rob temples.” What does that mean? It means what it says. The Jews robbed temples. What kind of temples? Well, we could go back to Malachi and show how they robbed the temple of God, but I don't think that's the issue here.

They did rob the temple of God. They robbed their own temple. According to Josephus, they robbed the temple in Jerusalem through some chicanery and some trickery. They got a noble Roman lady to give a bunch of money to them under the pretense it was going to Judaism and it was for the temple. And then they kept it and split it up, a group of Jews did. And in that way they robbed the Jerusalem temple.

But I don't think that's the issue here. To show you what it is, I need to read a scripture in the Old Testament, Deuteronomy 7:25. And listen, "The carved images of their gods [that is, of the gods of the pagans in their temples] you shall burn with fire, you shall not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee lest thou be snared therein, for it is an abomination to the Lord thy God. Neither shalt thou bring an abomination into thine house lest thou be a cursed thing like it, but thou shall utterly detest it and thou shalt utterly abhor it for it is a cursed thing."

In other words, you are to hate idols. You are to abhor idols. And if you come across one in the conquerings and in your movings through the world, you utterly destroy it and you don't save its value, you don't save its silver, you don't save its gold, you destroy it. Quite the contrary; you know what they were doing, apparently? They were robbing. They were actually going into pagan temples and stealing the idols, the silver and the gold, and taking them and finding the value of them for their own personal gain. So on the one hand, you're preaching against idolatry; on the other hand, you're robbing temples to make money off idols. Incredible.

In fact, it's hard in the New Testament to find a specific illustration of this. There's just one allusion to it in the nineteenth chapter of Acts. It says in verse 37, "You have brought here these men who are neither robbers of temples nor yet blasphemers of your goddess." When they captured the apostle and they brought him to the Gentile court, as it were, they said, you brought these men here and they didn't rob any temples. What does that assume? That assumes that on other occasions, Jews had been taken captive and brought to the tribunal for doing (What?) robbing temples. So it must have been a somewhat common activity. They probably justified it even though it was in direct violation of

Deuteronomy chapter 7. And by the way, nothing would have more provoked the Gentiles' anger than that. That really would have done it.

So, in spite of their heritage, and in spite of their knowledge, all that they learned and all that they taught was no security because of what they did. They didn't live up to it.

And finally, because of what they caused, and this is dynamite, verse 23. "Thou that makest thy boast of the law through breaking the law, thou dishonorest God." I take that as a statement rather than a question. You boast of the law, but you dishonor God in breaking the law. They broke the standard they supposedly learned and taught. They transgressed against God.

I think it's important to note there that it says when you break the law you dishonor God. Sin is always against God, Psalm 51. The psalmist David said, "My sin is against Thee." He said, "Against Thee, Thee only have I sinned." Sin is always against God. And so, when they broke the law, and the word *parabasis* is to step across or fall short, to violate the standard. When they sinned, they sinned against God. So here they are, we are the people of God, we boast in God, and we break God's laws. Boy, what an amazing dichotomy, what an amazing distinction between orthodoxy and orthopraxy. What an incredible way to live, to accept all of the blessing of God, the heritage and the knowledge, and then live in violation of all of that and still think you're secure.

I wonder to myself, you know, so many times about Christians who — people who at least call themselves Christians — who say they believe, and believe that all of the gospel is true, and they hang around the church, and they're a part of the church, but the fact is they never live it. And you see it not only in the pew but you see it in the pulpit as well. I mean, it just goes on all the time. I don't tell you all the things that come across my understanding in regard to that because I think you'd lose confidence in most of the people in the ministry. But it goes on all the time; people who don't live up to what they know and what they teach.

And as a result, look at what they cause, in verse 24. "For the name of God is blasphemed, or spoken evil against, among the Gentiles because of you." "My name continually every day is blasphemed," said Isaiah 52:5. By the way you live I'm constantly being blasphemed. You see, if you claim to know Christ, if you claim to know God, and then you live a sinful wicked life, if you say you've learned the truth about God and you teach the truth about God and live a sinful wicked life, you just blaspheme God, that's all.

And if you were to compare the Old Testament, just as a note, look at Ezekiel 36 and I think you'll find this interesting. Two ways in which God gets blasphemed: Ezekiel 36, I think it's verse 17, "Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own way and by their doings. Their way was before me as the uncleanness of a defiled woman, wherefore I poured my fury upon them for the blood that they had shed upon the land and for their idols by which they had polluted it. And I scattered them among the nations and they were dispersed through the countries. According to their way and according to their doings, I judged them." Now watch this. "And when they entered into the nations to which they went, they profaned my holy name when they said to them, these are the people of the Lord and are gone forth out of his land."

You know what that is? That's a statement of mockery. They're saying, "Hey, here is the people of the Lord, He must really be something, all He does is chase His people out of their land." What God is saying, and mark this, I don't know if you ever thought about it, is this, that when God has to chasten His people, the result is that the world thinks God to be unfair, unkind, judgmental, burdensome, overbearing and His name is dishonored. I mean, some people have shattered, broken lives because the Lord has chastened them; and people look at that and say, "You're a Christian, you believe in Christ, boy, He hasn't done you any favors." You see, your sin causes God's holy reaction to bring chastening. The result of that causes the world to say, “What kind of a God have you got?” And so, God's name is blasphemed when He has to chasten.

It seemed as though God was evil because He was forever having to chasten His people. It also seemed as if God was impotent. His people always seemed to be strung out in distress. And then, of course, there's the other factor, that they just lived the kind of life that dishonored God. For example, they said, "We believe in God, God is our God, we are the people of God, the God of Israel," and they lived a sinful, wretched life and people just concluded that their God must be evil just like they're evil. He's not only overbearing, and impotent, but He's evil to boot. And so the whole perspective on God was confused. Believe me, at that point in verse 24, the indictment has reached its climax.

Now here it comes. They said, "We are light to the Gentiles, we will teach those who are ignorant, we will lead men into truth." And God says, "You have caused the world to blaspheme My name because of the way you live." If you just, if you think you're secure because of what you know or what you've taught, but you haven't lived it, not only are you not secure but you're not helping anybody else and you're certainly not enhancing the reputation of God.

I've told a few people in my life that I would appreciate it if they didn't tell anybody anymore that they were Christians. I haven't told very many people that, but a few. And I've just suggested that it would be a lot easier for God's cause if they didn't identify with Him if they were going to live the way they were living. Look at your life. Do you adorn the doctrine of God or do you bring reproach upon Him? How you live in your family, your school, your job, whatever. Do you really put to silence the ignorance of foolish men? Do you shut the mouths of the critics? Do you let your light so shine before the world and before men that they may see your good works and (What?) glorify your Father who is in heaven? Do they glorify God when they see you? Do they see something honorable? Something noble? Something wonderful? Something lovely? Something pure about your life so that they honor the God who is your God? Or do they say that your God must be impotent, look at the mess you're in. Your God must be evil, look at the evil of your life. For whatever your life is reflects upon the one you say is your God.

No, there's no security in what you know. You only fall into a place of greater condemnation if you don't live it. You could also add the fact that the exclusivity of the Jews, their *provincialness*, their isolation from the Gentiles, they didn't like the Gentiles at all. I mean, even Jonah wasn't interested in going to the Gentiles. He'd rather take a short trip on a long fish than preach in Nineveh.

And so, the Gentiles begin to hate the Jews because they were so exclusive, so isolated. In fact, in Alexandria a story goes that the Jews had taken an oath never to show kindness to a Gentile and even were known to offer a Greek frequently as a sacrifice to God. You see, they just didn't live it. So God was blasphemed. The Gentiles began to regard Judaism as a barbarous superstition. They regarded the Jews as a contemptible company of slaves. In fact, there was a story going around that the Jews were a colony of lepers who had escaped from Egypt where they'd been working in the sand quarries. Moses had gone in there with his great leadership ability, rallied all the lepers and led them to Palestine.

It was said also that they abstained from pork flesh because the pig is specially liable to a skin disease called the "itch." And that was the disease that the Jews all had in Egypt. Now those are some of the ancient legends about them.

They even went so far as to say that they were not allowed to eat a pig because their God was a pig. You see, they had brought such terrible reproach upon the name of God. They failed so miserably, cause knowledge is no security. What you know or what you've taught doesn't make you secure at all. It only holds you more accountable.

Finally, the last security was the security of ceremony. And we'll run this by fast. The security of ceremony, verse 25: "For circumcision verily profiteth if you keep the law. But if you be a breaker of the law, your circumcision is made uncircumcision." Circumcision doesn't do you a bit of good if you don't keep the law, but if you keep the law it's just an added blessing. By the way, circumcision was a rite that was more ancient than Moses. You go all the way back to the seventeenth chapter of Genesis and you'll find a circumcision. But circumcision became the unique mark of the Jew. The eighth day after the child was born, it was circumcised. And that was an indication of the child being set apart to that special covenant relationship with God. It was very important, very important.

It's kind of interesting back in Exodus chapter 4 when Moses forgot or failed for whatever reason to circumcise his child and his wife did it with a stone and told Moses he was a bloody man and she was angry about it. She did the rite, not because she believed God wanted her to, but she did it grudgingly to keep Moses from getting some kind of terrible chastening from God. So it must have been a very important thing. She circumcised her child with a stone to prevent her husband from falling into the judgment of God. God wanted His people to be circumcised. It was a meaningful symbol of the covenant. It was the mark on the human body that this was the covenant people.

But it didn't mean anything, verse 25 says, if you didn't keep the law. But the Jew thought, just because I'm circumcised, I'm okay. It's a perfect parallel to baptism. In fact, infant baptism today cannot be found in the Bible. It is simply translating the concept of circumcision into the church, and instead of circumcising a child, which now is done medically, they simply baptize a child as the sign of the covenant. But it has no New Testament teaching. It's strictly a sort of an extension of Old Testament circumcision. It was the mark of the covenant. And the Jew felt, because I have the mark of the covenant, I'm okay. And here Paul says, if you don't keep it, it doesn't mean anything. I always think about that old deal of the boxer who goes into the ring and crosses himself. And a guy says, "Does it help?" The other guy says it does if he can punch. If you can't punch, it doesn't make any difference. It's nice to think God's on your side, but it helps if you can punch.

It was the sign of God's promise. It was the sign of God's blessing. It was the sign of God's protection and care and love, but it didn't mean a thing if he didn't keep the law. That message is also repeated in the fifth chapter of Galatians. He says, "I testify to every man that is circumcised that he's a debtor to keep the law." If you're circumcised, it doesn't mean you're free from the law. It just means you're in the covenant and you've got to keep it all. You want to know the truth of it? And this is the most interesting thought, I don't know if you ever thought of it, circumcision was a symbol of the fact that men were condemned, not that they were saved. Because if you were circumcised it said you were in

the covenant and the covenant was that you had to keep the law. So it was a sign of your *lostness*, not your redemption. It was a constant reminder that you had to keep God's law, you were in the covenant. You had to keep God's law. And you couldn't keep God's law so you were lost. But to them, just being circumcised was their security.

In fact, the rabbis said. I'll quote some of the rabbis. "No circumcised man will see hell." Rabbi Joel Kut Rabin said, "Circumcision saves us from hell." In the midrash, it says, "God swore to Abraham that no one who was circumcised would be sent to hell. Abraham sits before the gate of hell and never allows any circumcised Israelite to enter." Now they believed they were saved by that. All that was was a constant reminder that they were responsible to the covenant. It was an outward sign of an inward responsibility. It was an outward sign of an inward obligation and duty before God.

In Jeremiah 6:9 it says, "Thus saith the Lord of hosts, They shall thoroughly glean the remnant of Israel as a vine. Turn back thine hand. Like a grape, gather into the baskets. To whom shall I speak and give warning that they may hear? Behold, their ear is uncircumcised and they cannot hearken." Circumcised became then the concept of a spiritual reality, or the symbol of a spiritual reality. God wanted ears that were circumcised, that is, obedient to the covenant. Later on in chapter 9 he talks about circumcising the heart. God wanted an obedient ear to hear the truth of God and God wanted an obedient heart to respond to the truth of God.

Now look at verse 26. And he looks at the same issue from an opposite angle. "Therefore if the *uncircumcision* — that’s the Gentiles, the ones that aren't circumcised — keep the righteousness of the law, shall not his *uncircumcision* be counted for circumcision?" In other words, a Gentile who keeps the law of God is going to be included in the covenant blessing even if he isn't circumcised. And he's only reinforcing verse 25, circumcision doesn't mean anything. If you break the law, it isn't going to help you. And if you keep the law, it isn't necessary. The point being, circumcision is not necessary. Everything depends on whether you keep the law. Everything depends on obedience.

You go back to chapter 2, verse 6. God will render to every man according to his circumcision. Is that what it says? "According to (his what?) his deeds,” his works. So circumcision, mark this, has no inherent value. It has no efficacy. It has no power to redeem. It is only a symbol. And not a symbol that everything is okay, but a symbol that everything is not okay because it reminds me that I'm obligated to keep the whole law. There is no security in that symbol. There is only insecurity, because man can't keep the law whether he's circumcised or not. And in chapter 4 we'll get into this in more detail when he shows how Abraham was righteous before he was ever circumcised, so that his circumcision had nothing to do with whether or not he was righteous.

Now a fatal shot in verse 27. And here is the last verse that deals with their security, the fatal shot. "And shall not *uncircumcision* — that's the Gentile by nature, Gentiles by nature — if it fulfill the law, judge thee, who by the letter in circumcision dost transgress the law?" You know what that says? An obedient Gentile will be the judge of a disobedient, a disobedient Jew. Oh that is... They don't want to hear that. The Gentile will not really assume the role of a judge. That's not the idea here. God is the judge. But the Gentile will assume the role of a witness for the prosecution. Why? Listen to this. If a Jew comes into the court and says, "Hey, I mean, I didn't know what I was supposed to do." All God has to say is, "You see this uncircumcised Gentile, he did what was right and he didn't know what you knew, therefore he is living testimony of your guilt." You see? It's an interesting argument on Paul's part.

The obedience of an uncircumcised Gentile is proof of the responsibility of a circumcised Jew. They held on to circumcision like people do to infant baptism that we talked about last week. The Roman Catholic Church thinks people are saved by the sacraments. And there are many sacramental Protestants and people who believe in Protestantism that your baptism at your birth was redeeming. Not so. The great theologian Hodge said, "Whenever true religion declines, the disposition to lay undo stress on external rites is stressed. The Jews when they lost their spirituality supposed that circumcision had the power to save them." He's right in the liberal dominations, in the dominations that are moving away from the Word of God and the gospel of God. They are more and more holding their salvation to the sacraments, as in the Roman Church; baptism, communion, extreme unction or whatever else saves you, because the heart is dead.

So, we follow then what Paul does. He destroys their securities, just shatters them. And he sums it up in the last two verses. Follow very closely. First, in verse 28 he says, "Your heritage is invalid because...” And here he sums it up, “Your heritage is invalid because he is not a Jew who is one outwardly." Stop there.

A true Jew is not one outwardly. Now go to verse 29. "But he is a Jew who is one (What?) inwardly." Inwardly. What are you saying, Paul? What I'm saying is it isn't your physical heritage, it isn't your biological descent. Matthew 3:9, John the Baptist said, "God could raise up sons of Abraham out of these rocks if He wanted to." It's not your biology, it is your heart. Are you inwardly one of the people of God? You see? That's what Romans 9:6 means when it says, "Not all Israel is Israel." Not all Jews are true Jews. A true Jew is one who is inwardly a Jew. What does that mean? That you're not the people of God physically but that you're the people of God (What?) spiritually.

Second, secondly, ceremony is also invalid as a security. Verse 28: "Neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh." Physical act of circumcision isn't the issue. Verse 29, "And circumcision is that of the heart," of the heart. It is the cutting away of evil from the heart. It is the cutting away of the unclean from the heart. It is the renewal of the heart. Jeremiah 9:26, Jeremiah said the people are not circumcised in their hearts. They're not covenant keepers in their hearts. That's the issue.

And finally, knowledge is invalid because, verse 29, "It is in the spirit and not in the (What?) the letter." Having the letter of the law, possessing the knowledge, isn't the issue. It is in the spirit, the soul, the inner self having the Word of God. It is what Colossians means when it says, "Let the Word of Christ dwell in you richly." It's in the spirit, not in the external letter.

Now you show me a Jew who is a Jew inwardly in his heart, he's the people of God, who has a circumcised heart — in his heart he keeps the covenant — you show me a Jew who understands the spirit of obedience, not just the external letter of the law and I'll show you a Jew, verse 29, "Whose praise is not from men but (What?) from God." From God. The Jews outwardly sought to receive praise from men, but a true Jew receives praise from God. By the way, the word "Jew" comes from Judah, and Judah means "praised." "Whose praise is not of men but God" is a play on words. He is a true Jew for he lives up to his name. He is praised by God. That is a true Jew.

David had that when he said, "Behold, Thou desirest truth (Listen to this.) in the inward parts." That's the issue. So the Jew is not exempt from condemnation. All of his securities are destroyed. And immediately the question pops up in chapter 3 verse 1, and what is it? What advantage then has the Jew? What's the di... Why be Jewish? That's what we're going to study next time. I mean, if we don't get any securities from our nation, our law, our sign, what's the big deal about being Jewish? Well two weeks from tonight we're going to talk about the big deal about being Jewish. And it's a tremendous, tremendous blessing. Let's bow in prayer.

Father, we have seen tonight again how that no man can stand before Thee, not the immoral, irreligious, dissipated, sin-loving, Christ-hating man; not the outwardly moral, religious, ethical, good-citizen type who tries to stand on his own goodness; and not even the religious Jew who thinks because he is a Jew and has the law and the circumcision he must be secure. Father, none of them stand. Lord, I pray that if there's anyone in this place tonight who has found themselves feeling comfortable because of what they know, or comfortable because of their heritage or comfortable because they have been baptized, that you'll destroy those securities because they're false, and drive them to Christ, who alone can change the heart, the inside.

Lord, we know that Paul's purpose was to show them that there was an inward heart attitude necessary that they on their own could never attain and thus to drive them to Christ, who alone would give them that new heart by faith. Do the same, Father, in the hearts of any here who sense the frustration of having counted on false security. Bring them to the point where they know they have no security and cast themselves upon Christ who secures them forever.

While your heads are bowed for just a moment. If you do not know Christ tonight, I don't want to close the service without inviting you to open your heart to Him in a simple prayer of faith. Just say, “Lord Jesus, I believe that You are my Savior, You died and rose again, I invite You to come into my heart.” Open your heart to Him, confess your sin, receive Him as your Savior. Let Him change your life and replace the false security with true security. He said that when He has you, you're hid with Christ in God. He said you're hid in His hand and no man can ever take you out. He'll make you secure forever if you come to Him by faith.

Thank You, Father, for our fellowship tonight. Bring those, Lord, that You would have to come, and work a work in every heart. Thank You, Father, that none of us has any resource because we can't have that right heart except Jesus plant it in us. Thank You that He's done that since we believed. And we give Him the glory. Amen.

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