

## The Good News

### Week 4 - Romans 2:17-29

#### Objectives:

- Recognize that “religion” won’t save us.
- Remember Jesus came to bring the good news to both Jews and Gentiles.

? When is a time you broke the rules? What happened?

#### About Boasting

Can someone summarize the first part of chapter 2?

#### Read Romans 2:17-29 NIV:

<sup>17</sup> Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; <sup>18</sup> if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; <sup>19</sup> if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, <sup>20</sup> an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— <sup>21</sup> you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? <sup>22</sup> You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? <sup>23</sup> You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? <sup>24</sup> As it is written: “God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”

<sup>25</sup> Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. <sup>26</sup> So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? <sup>27</sup> The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

<sup>28</sup> A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. <sup>29</sup> No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person’s praise is not from other people, but from God.

? Whom is Paul talking to, and why?

*Possible answers: Jewish people, specifically those who thought they were ok solely because they were Jewish. He’s calling them out and warning them that they are in need just like the Gentiles.*

? What does it look like to boast in the law?

*Possible answers: Pride that comes from rule following. Feeling good because you don’t do this or do that.*

## Religion vs. Gospel

### Read Genesis 17:10–14 NIV:

<sup>10</sup> This is my covenant with you and your descendants after you, the covenant you are to keep: Every male among you shall be circumcised. <sup>11</sup> You are to undergo circumcision, and it will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. <sup>12</sup> For the generations to come every male among you who is eight days old must be circumcised, including those born in your household or bought with money from a foreigner—those who are not your offspring. <sup>13</sup> Whether born in your household or bought with your money, they must be circumcised. My covenant in your flesh is to be an everlasting covenant. <sup>14</sup> Any uncircumcised male, who has not been circumcised in the flesh, will be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

? What was the significance of circumcision?

*Possible answers: It was a sign of the covenant made between Abraham and God.*

? What is circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:29)? And why is that significant?

*Possible answers: Paul is saying that just because someone is not circumcised that doesn't mean they won't receive the promises from God—and this would have been shocking to the Jews. Paul specifically says the Spirit has done this and it is not something we can do.*

? If we are not Jewish, how does this passage relate to us?

*Possible answers: We can fall into the same thoughts or trap that something we do makes us right with God. Or being born into a Christian family means we're right with God. Are there some benefits to being born into a family of believers? Yes. But does that make you right with God? No.*

? What are things we do that make us think we are right with God?

*Possible answers: Go to church, go to small group, read our Bible consistently, work in ministry etc...*

? It seems obvious to us when we read about circumcision, that the Jewish people were missing the point sometimes. But we do it too (remember last week!?). What are ways you've seen “religion” become a bad thing?

*Possible answers: When it becomes a way to shame or guilt other people, when it becomes legalistic, when it becomes about us instead of God.*

? Take a look at the chart below. What stands out to you? What can you relate to?

*Possible answers: Answers will vary. See chart below.*

RELIGION	GOSPEL
"I obey; therefore I'm accepted."	"I'm accepted; therefore I obey."
Motivation is based on fear and insecurity.	Motivation is based on grateful joy.
I obey God in order to get <i>things</i> from God.	I obey God to get <i>God</i> —to delight and resemble him.
When circumstances in my life go wrong, I am angry at God or myself, since I believe, like Job's friends, that anyone who is good deserves a comfortable life.	When circumstances in my life go wrong, I struggle, but I know that while God may allow this for my training, he will exercise his fatherly love within my trial.
When I'm criticized, I am furious or devastated because it is essential for me to think of myself as a "good person." Threats to that self-image must be destroyed at all costs.	When I am criticized, I struggle, but it is not essential for me to think of myself as a "good person." My identity is not built on my performance but on God's love for me in Christ.
My prayer life consists largely of petition and only heats up when I am in need. My main purpose in prayer is to control circumstances.	My prayer life consists of generous stretches of praise and adoration. My main purpose is fellowship with him.
My self-view swings between two poles. If and when I am living up to my standards, I feel confident, but then I am prone to be proud and unsympathetic to people who fail. If and when I am not living up to standards, I feel humble but not confident—I feel like a failure.	My self-view is not based on a view of myself as a moral achiever. In Christ I am at once sinful and lost, yet accepted. I am so bad he <i>had</i> to die for me, and so loved he was <i>glad</i> to die for me. This leads me to deeper humility as well as deeper confidence, without either sniveling or swaggering.
My identity and self-worth are based mainly on how hard I work or how moral I am, so I <i>must</i> look down on those I perceive as lazy or immoral. I disdain and feel superior to others.	My identity and self-worth are centered on the One who died for his enemies, including me. Only by sheer grace am I what I am, so I <i>can't</i> look down on those who believe or praise something different from me. I have no inner need to win arguments.
Since I look to my pedigree or performance for my spiritual acceptability, my head manufactures idols—talents, moral record, personal discipline, social status, etc. I absolutely <i>have</i> to have them, so they are my main hope, meaning, happiness, security, and significance, whatever I say I believe about God.	I have many good things in my life—family, work, etc., but none of these good things are <i>ultimate</i> things to me. I don't absolutely <i>have</i> to have them, so there is a limit to how much anxiety, bitterness, and despair they can inflict on me when they are threatened and lost.

From Timothy Keller, *Center Church: Doing Balanced, Gospel-Centered Ministry in Your City* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2012), 65.

**Read out loud: Chapter 2 of Romans is kinda rough. There's a lot of bad news, and it's a lot about our sinful nature, but the good news is coming...!**

#### **For Discussion and Accountability**

**?** Which of the religion vs. gospel statements stand out or convict you? Are there any of these that are easier for you to fall into the "religion" category?

**?** This coming week, how can you practically rest in the good news of God's grace?