

Sermon Title: The Jew is Under the Sentence of Condemnation, Part 1

Sermon Text: Romans 2:17-24

Sermon Purpose: To call the hearer to guard against self-righteous pride, that leads to false security.

Sermon Proposition: There are 3 reasons why the Jewish, religious, or covenant people are condemned.

- I. Pride in national identity will not justify a person. V.17**
- II. Possession of national knowledge will not justify a person. V.18-24**
- III. Practice of national ceremonies will not justify a person. V.25-29**

Introduction: If Romans 2:6-16 teaches anything, it's that a redeemed life will produce holy living and that the life that reflects no holy living has no claim on eternal life. Right and righteous living, which can only come from right motivation, is God-given evidence of genuine salvation. Lack of right or righteous living is just as certain evidence of lostness.

Paul in the previous passages as well as this passage seeks to strip the Jew of all false security, based on self-righteousness.

The problem is that the religious person or covenant people lacks the essential standard of righteousness.

Matthew 3:2 and saying, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!"

Matthew 4:17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

Matthew 5:48 "Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.

Paul is not claiming that every Jew (religious or covenant person) committed all these sins but that all transgress the law and righteousness of God, which hinders anyone from entering the eternal presence of God. The Jews though believed that God had granted them special privilege or exemptions from His judgments, as well as the mission to bring light to the Gentiles. (**Is 42:6-7; Luke 12:48; Matthew 23:28**)

"Jews had long since lost sight of the purpose of their unique divine calling, however, which was to be the channel through which 'all the families of the earth shall be blessed' (Gen. 12:3). They had no desire to share their God-given truths and blessings with the rest of the world, much less be used by the Lord as the means through which He would draw all nations to Himself. Jonah's reluctance to preach in Nineveh because he feared they would believe in God and be spared judgment (Jonah 4:2) typified the attitude of many Jews toward Gentiles.

Instead of viewing those divine truths and blessings as a trust from a gracious and forgiving God, they viewed them as their right by merit. They believed they were specially blessed not because of God's grace but because of their own goodness. They felt superior and proud. ... John Murray observed that such an attitude 'demonstrates ...how close lies the grossest vice to the highest privilege and how the best can be prostituted to the service of the worst.'

The minor prophets repeatedly warned their fellow countrymen about arrogant boasting in their heritage as God's chosen people, which caused many of them to think they could sin with impunity. As the heirs of God's promise to Abraham, they believed they were automatically protected from judgment.

Micah 3:11 Her heads judge for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD, and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us." **12** Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed *like* a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, And the mountain of the temple Like the bare hills of the forest.

...They were so self-deluded about their superiority and independence that they retorted, 'We are Abraham's offspring, and have never yet been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, "You shall become free' (v. 33). As the Lord explained, they completely missed His point. 'Truly, truly, I say to you,' He said, 'everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin' (v. 34).

Even if Jesus had been speaking politically, as those leaders assumed, their response would have been ludicrous. For the past 100 years they had been brutally subjugated to Rome, and immediately before that to Greece. And during more than a thousand years before that they had been in periodic bondage to Egypt, Assyria, and Babylon.

John 8:40 "But now you seek to kill Me, a Man who has told you the truth which I heard from God. Abraham did not do this. **41** "You do the deeds of your father." Then they said to Him, "We were not born of fornication; we have one Father-- God." **42** Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and came from God; nor have I come of Myself, but He sent Me. ... **44** "You are of *your* father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *resources*, for he is a liar and the father of it. ... **56** "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw *it* and was glad.""

[John MacArthur, The MacArthur New Testament Commentary, Romans 1-8, Moody Press, Chicago, 1991, pp.148-149]

I. Pride in national identity will not justify a person. V.17

A. Pride in being called a Jew.

Previously called Hebrew, Israelites, seed of Abraham, this all lead to a pride in their heritage. By the 1st century "Jew" had become the most common name for all the descendants of Abraham, through Isaac. "Jew" comes from Judah meaning "praise."

From the time of the Babylonian captivity, the whole race bore this title. Their great heritage, however (**Genesis 12:3** *I will bless those who bless you, And I will curse him who curses you; And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.*) became a source of pride and complacency (**John 8:31-34, 40-59**; **Jonah 4:2** *So he prayed to the LORD, and said, "Ah, LORD, was not this what I said when I was still in my country? Therefore I fled previously to Tarshish; for I know that You are a gracious and merciful God, slow to anger and abundant in lovingkindness, One who relents from doing harm. Micah 3:11 Her heads judge for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD, and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us." **12** Therefore because of you Zion shall be plowed like a field, Jerusalem shall become heaps of ruins, And the mountain of the temple Like the bare hills of the forest.*) which led to judgment instead of praise.

B. Pride in being possessor of the law.

The Jew often took pride in being the possessors of the law and their reliance was based on this privilege. This was no doubt a blessing unique to the Jew, the problem was that Jews relied on the possession of the law as the covenant people to claim special exemption from the judgment of God, Micah the prophet refers to this in (**Micah 3:11** *Her heads judge for a bribe, Her priests teach for pay, And her prophets divine for money. Yet they lean on the LORD, and say, "Is not the LORD among us? No harm can come upon us."*).

C. Pride in their being able to boast in God.

The Jew boasted in their special relationship with God. Boasting in God in and of itself is not wrong (**Jeremiah 9:23** *Thus says the LORD: "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, Let not the mighty man glory in his might, Nor let the rich man glory in his riches; **24** But let him who glories glory in this, That he understands and knows Me, That I am the LORD, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. For in these I delight," says the LORD. **1 Corinthians 1:31** that, as it is written, "He who glories, let him glory in the LORD." **2 Corinthians 10:17** But "he who glories, let him glory in the LORD.") makes this clear. Therefore, the Jews' "boasting in God" is not wrong, but reliance or boasting in human pride and arrogance is, but a legitimate pride and joy in the God Who had given Israel many blessings was and is valid.*

II. Possession of national knowledge will not justify a person. V.24

A. Pride in knowing the will of God. V.18a

Taken by itself, this appears to be a compliment of the Jew, but upon further inspection it is an indictment, because the Jews and their leaders did not live up to the Law they know so well and praised highly. They loved to quote (*Psalm 147:19 He declares His word to Jacob, His statutes and His judgments to Israel. 20 He has not dealt thus with any nation; And as for His judgments, they have not known them. Praise the LORD!*), but since it was impossible for anyone to keep all of God's law perfectly some of the teachers (rabbis) began merely to teach knowing was enough.

B. Pride in knowing the things approved of by God. V.18b

Jeremiah 7:3 Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Amend your ways and your doings, and I will cause you to dwell in this place. **4** "Do not trust in these lying words, saying, 'The temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD, the temple of the LORD are these.' **5** "For if you thoroughly amend your ways and your doings, if you thoroughly execute judgment between a man and his neighbor, **6** "if you do not oppress the stranger, the fatherless, and the widow, and do not shed innocent blood in this place, or walk after other gods to your hurt, **7** "then I will cause you to dwell in this place, in the land that I gave to your fathers forever and ever.

Spiritual security was not in the Temple but in God Himself and in faithful obedience to the divine truth and righteous standard which the Temple symbolizes. Greeks were impressed with the accumulation of knowledge.

C. Pride in what they taught about the Law. V.19-20

1. Confident in their being guides to the blind. (**Matt 23:24-28**)
2. Confident of being a light to those in darkness. (**Is 42:6; Gen 12:3; Matt 5:14-16**)
3. Confident of being a corrector of the foolish.
4. Confident of being teachers to the immature.

The Jews did have all these responsibilities, through the divine revelation of the Law, knowledge and truth were deeded to them, but their teaching, understanding, and example had become so contaminated with the traditions of men, that God's true law and its meaning and purpose was generally unknown and disregarded by the people and the nations they were to witness to.

D. Pride in what they did in relation to the Law. V.21-22

2 Corinthians 11:14 And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light.

Psalm 50:16 But to the wicked God says: "What *right* have you to declare My statutes, Or take My covenant in your mouth, **17** Seeing you hate instruction And cast My words behind you? **18** When you saw a thief, you consented with him, And have been a partaker with adulterers. **19** You give your mouth to evil, And your tongue frames deceit. **20** You sit *and* speak against your brother; You slander your own mother's son.

James 3:1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

Matthew 23:3 "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, *that* observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do.

1. Preach and teach against stealing, but steal.
2. Preach and teach against adultery, but divorce to do so.
3. Preach and teach against idols, but conquer pagan cultures and sell their idol to make money.

Deuteronomy 7:25 "You shall burn the carved images of their gods with fire; you shall not covet the silver or gold *that is* on them, nor take *it* for yourselves, lest you be snared by it; for it *is* an abomination to the LORD your God.

Acts 19:37 "For you have brought these men here who are neither robbers of temples nor blasphemers of your goddess.

E. Pride in what they caused by breaking God's Law. V.23-24

Quote from:

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

Ezekiel 36:17 "Son of man, when the house of Israel dwelt in their own land, they defiled it by their own ways and deeds; to Me their way was like the uncleanness of a woman in her customary impurity. **18** "Therefore I poured out My fury on them for the blood they had shed on the land, and for their idols *with which* they had defiled it. **19** "So I scattered them among the nations, and they were dispersed throughout the countries; I judged them according to their ways and their deeds. **20** "When they came to the nations, wherever they went, they profaned My holy name-- when they said of them, 'These *are* the people of the LORD, *and* yet they have gone out of His land.'

1. Blasphemed when He judges.
2. Blasphemed when He doesn't judge.