

“Religion Can’t Save You” //

Romans 2:1–29 // Romans #5

Who’s Your One?

The vision of the Summit is to create a **movement of disciple-making disciples**, here in RDU and around the world.

- We do that by **reaching** people, **developing** them, and **sending** them out.
- This year we are going to help **stir that movement** by having one goal that encourages all those things.
- **Our rallying cry for 2019** is, “*Who’s Your One?*” We’re asking **every member of the Summit to identify one person** that they will pray for, build a relationship with, and work to bring to Christ over the course of the year.

Along the way this year we’re **going to provide training, practical ideas, and so forth**.

We’re going to **pray in just a minute**... but if this is **intimidating to you**... I want to encourage you to take it slow and make some small changes.

- Teaching our staff *Atomic Habits*: key to changing your life is found in changing small habits
 - Want to **stop eating junk food**, put nuts and fruit out on counter
 - **Work out** for 3 minutes
 - One guy just had the goal to drive to the gym
- **For evangelism**:
 - Pray daily for a “one”
 - Listen for 3 “not statements”: if you only did that, things would

Works Consulted:

“Romans 2,” sermon, Tim Keller.

“The Heart of the Matter,” Tony Merida

“God’s Kindness,” Joby Martin

“Religion Fails,” Joby Martin

“Romans 2,” John MacArthur

change!

- Have one person not from the church over for dinner 1x a month
- Take walks in neighborhood

We’re praying to see 1,000 professions of faith: 1k people who are being shared and shown the gospel by *you*, the members of TSC.

- We will count people who come to faith in our services, or at Starting Point, or that you just tell us about. If you have a great story, share it with us: email one@summitrdu.com *
- **So far, we’ve had 66 total professions of faith**

Lead Prayer Time

- God would give us 1,000 POF
- We would be intentional
- Jesus would make himself known

Introduction

Romans 2, p. 24

There’s a **book in my library called *UnChristian*** that analyzes the results of this extensive, nationwide study conducted by the Barna group in which they sought to **compare the lives Christians** and non-Christians to see what the actual differences are.

- BTW, **I’m usually skeptical of these things** because I want to know, “Well, who do they count as Christian?” Just those who self-identify? Because we have a lot of people in our country who say, “Well, I’m not Jewish or Muslim or atheist--so I must be Christian.” And we wouldn’t say those are actual Christians.

- But in this survey, they **didn't count you as a Christian** unless you could articulate the gospel and affirm your belief in it. So, that's at least a little higher threshold.
- And **the survey was completely anonymous** so that people would be honest about their lifestyles.
- **Here's what they found:**
 - They found that Christians **cuss less in public** (they had to specify--not so much less in private, just in public or around Nana).
 - They give a little bit **more to the poor**.
 - They are **less likely to recycle** (because, you know, the world is just going to burn up anyway)
 - Christians **give more money** to religious nonprofits.
 - And, Christians on the whole **buy fewer lottery tickets**.
 - So, that's all super encouraging. We're really putting Jesus on display in those areas
- **However, Christians are just as likely...****
 - To visit a pornographic website as those who are not.
 - To get drunk.
 - Just as likely to do illegal drugs or to take prescription medicines not prescribed to them.
 - To be willing to lie to get out of a difficult situation
 - To have intentionally done something to get back at someone within the last 30 days
 - To have said an unkind thing about someone behind their back in the last 30 days
- **In this study, 84% of non-Christians said they knew at least one believer personally, but only 15%** thought that person's lifestyle was significantly different than their own.
 - One **non-Christian in the survey described his perception of conservative Christians as:** illogical, empire-builders, prone to violence; and people who cannot generally live peacefully with those who don't believe what they believe.

- And I realize that there's a lot of **mischaracterization** out there in the media and movies about us, but **can't we own** that we are at least partially responsible, at least in part, for some of this perception? I mean, these are **self-reported things**.
- Is **this really what Jesus had in mind** when he died to create a **new race of people**--that they would know we were his disciples by how we cussed less around grandma and **bought less lottery tickets**?
- Didn't he say they would know us by **our love**?

Paul's point in Romans 2 is that religion is often just a thin veneer papered over a heart that is still every bit as sinful as everyone else's, and that religion by itself is powerless to change our hearts. It might change our behavior, but nothing deeper.

Remember, **in Romans 1, Paul has laid out his case** for why all people need the gospel. He **has painted a graphic picture** of the corruption of the human race.

- And **now, as he opens chapter 2, he anticipates an objection** from his religious, Jewish readers.
- (Paul has taught the gospel, you see, to religious Jews now for 20 years so he knows what objections will pop up.)
- And, **btw, every time it says "Jew" in this chapter**, you could sub-out, "church-going Christian"--because Paul's focus is on religious people--it's just that **most of his audience** happens to be religious Jews)
- They are all like, *"Yeah, you tell 'em Paul. Those Gentiles are some messed-up people All that idolatry and sexual disorder and societal chaos and stuff."*

2 Therefore (There it is--whenever you see the word therefore... he's pointing back to chapter 1 and saying that all of you who were just shaking your heads at how bad everyone was), **every one of you who**

judges is without excuse. For when you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things.

- “**Look within, religious person,** your heart is the same.”
 - (Listen, **when people tell me they are enjoying Romans,** “*Oh, Pastor, I just love this new series on Romans; it’s so encouraging*”) I know they haven’t really been paying attention yet. **Romans is not encouraging.** At least, not yet. You don’t get to all the encouraging stuff until chapter 8.
 - This is a **full-out assault** on you.
 - It’s **not “A-men,”** it’s “oh my.”
- “**Look within, religious person,**” he says, “is your heart really any better?”

Paul says, “**You religious people think you’re better** because you know the Bible, know the right answers, and go to church,”

⁶ But “**He will repay each one according to his works:**” ⁷ eternal life to those who by persistence in doing good (that means they have a consistent habit of doing good whether others are watching or not) **seek glory, honor, and immortality;** (that is, we seek it from the Creator and not from created things--we all seek these things from somewhere: read these as meaning and security. We delight in God for those things in our hearts).

⁸ but wrath and anger to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth while obeying unrighteousness. (those who put their own self-will ahead of God, and who seek their own glory instead of God’s--even if, btw, they do it in religious garb--maybe their good works are not really motivated by love for God or others; **and those who inwardly follow their hearts** and do not receive instruction from God even while outwardly conforming to religion) ⁹ There will be affliction and distress for every human being who does evil, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek; ¹⁰ but glory, honor, and peace for everyone

who does what is good, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no favoritism with God.

So, Paul says, “**God sees the heart, and when he evaluates us,** what counts with God is not **external conformity** in religion, but inward transformation from the heart.”

Now, you say, “WAIT--has Paul changed his mind about the gospel?”

- **Didn’t Paul just get done explaining** in chapter 1 that salvation is NOT earned through good works but given as a gift through faith alone?
- And **now he is saying, vs. 6, that God will repay** each of us according to our works?”
- **Great question. Verse 6 is a quote from Psalm 62** in which the Psalmist is complaining about a group of religious people who honor God with their mouths while their feet are quick to run after violence. They give an external show of religion, but internally they are still filled with wickedness.
- ***Paul’s point is that **external practices of religion do not equal inward transformation.*****
- And **when it’s all said and done, on that final day,** God is going to look at the inward works of the heart--beyond outward performance of religion to inward motivations.
- And **some works that look good on the surface** are not really going to look that good when you really get down into the motives for why they were done.
 - Classic story: **Neck warmer:**
 - **Did she know?**
 - The point is, **just because a work looks good** doesn’t mean it is good.
 - I **didn’t give her that as an act of love;** I did it to try and rescue myself from a bad reputation
- **A lot of things done in the name of religion** aren’t done out of love for God, either, **even though they look good on the surface,**

but God sees down to the heart and one day he's going to evaluate us on that.

Now, you say, "So, am I going to be judged by my works--my heart motivations? Will those determine whether I get into heaven?"

PAY VERY CLOSE ATTENTION (b/c if not you'll miss the point here)

- **In one sense, no.** For by grace you have been saved through faith...
- **But in other sense, yes.** Because your life is the best illustration of what you actually believe.
- **Faith, you see, is not just words.** Faith is a heart change.
 - **Repentance is not walking an aisle** or raising a hand, it is a heart change.
 - **Conversion is not joining a church** or getting baptized, it is the Holy Spirit coming to take up residence in our heart and making it new.
- And that means that **when we have truly been saved, good works** will always follow.
 - **When Jesus takes up residence in your life, it should make a difference.**
- **Paul teaches that we are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.** (it's always accompanied by good works)
- Or I love how Jerry Bridges says it: **"Holiness is not a condition FOR salvation, but it is always part OF salvation."**
 - In a sense, **God could put us on trial in heaven** and say, "Has this person's life demonstrated the effects of true conversion?"
 - 2 testimonies: life and mouth: Their mouth said they believed Jesus was Lord and that they were a new creation--but did their lives show that?
- And so, in that sense, you will be judged by your works **because your works show the reality (or non-reality) of what you believe.**

- **SO, MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION:** So what does your life declare about your belief in, or your surrender to, Jesus?

You see, ¹³...The hearers of the law (in our day, he might say, "Possessors of the Bible") **are not righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be justified.** Again, he makes the point: **it's not not having the law, or knowing the Bible,** that matters. It is whether you obey the laws from the heart that would make you right with God.

And he drives the point home from another angle, vs 14: He says, "Just having the law doesn't save you--I'll prove it. You Jews are not the only ones with a law."

¹⁴So, when Gentiles, who do not by nature have the law, do what the law demands, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences confirm this.

- **We talked about this a couple of weeks ago.** The Gentiles have a law too that God stamped on their consciences.
- Paul says, "The Gentiles **have the law written on their hearts** and they obey it sometimes, too, just like you do.
- So, **if having the law and obeying it** sometimes is enough, they are in the same boat as you, because they do that too: **They've got a law written on their hearts and they obey it.**
- But **possessing the law is not what makes a person right** with God--only doing the law, from the heart, if that were even possible, would make someone right with God.
- And he's **pointing to the fact that underneath the heart of the religious person is the same corrupt heart** that exists in the Gentiles--just a **religified** version of it
- And when you **pull back the external layers of religion one day**, you're going to find the same corrupted mess you found in the Gentiles

- See what he says next? ¹⁶ ...on the day when God judges what people have kept secret, according to my gospel through Christ Jesus.
 - **One day, God is going to expose the hearts of both Jews and Gentiles both**--and we'll see through all the religious observance down to what their hearts are really like.
 - And that's not going to be a good day for anybody--not Jew or Gentile.
 - Because the fallen heart is *deceitful above all things and desperately wicked*.
 - **On that day, when our hearts are revealed**, neither Jew nor Gentile will have a leg to stand on.
 - **Here's how the 16th-century Reformer John Calvin summarizes these verses:** *"We can prove from this passage that no one is justified by works; for if they alone are justified by the law who fulfill the law, it follows that no one is justified; for **no one can be found who can boast of having fulfilled the law.**"^{1**}*

Let's do a little exercise to make this more tangible. (Some of you love taking those little quizzes in magazines that tell you what you are really like.

- You know your Enneagram # is and which Friends character you are and what Harry Potter house you're in and what kind of cheese you are
- (Seriously, I took this one the other day. I'm a gouda if anyone's curious.)
- Here's a **biblical one** for you:

The **10 Commandments** are probably the best example of where your heart stands with God:

¹ John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*

- Let's do a little quiz. Take out your notebook and write out two categories:

Yes

No

- I'll read a few of the commandments, and give you a short explanation of it, and if you feel like you pretty consistently keep it, check yes. If not, check no.

DO YOU KEEP THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?²

1. You shall have no other gods before me: (Can you say--)I have never put anything before God in my life. I have never loved or trusted or obeyed anything more than God. God has always been pre-eminent in my thoughts, affections, and actions. Worshipping him has always been the greatest passion in my life**. YES ___ NO ___

3. You shall not take my name in vain: I have always held the name of God in highest respect, never uttering it carelessly.** Nor have I ever desecrated God's name by calling myself his follower yet not representing him well. The way I talk, act, spend money, and drive give honor to the God whose name I attach to my life and whose bumper sticker I plaster on my car. YES ___ NO ___

5. Honor your parents: I have always respected and obeyed the authorities in my life, and given them honor and willing obedience whether they were watching or not. This includes my parents, my teachers, traffic cops, and the IRS. YES ___ NO ___

6. You shall not kill: I have never murdered anyone (Maybe you can say this. But remember what Jesus did with this commandment in the Sermon on the Mount... so you have to be able to say), nor have I had

² Adapted from Will Metzger, *Tell the Truth*, Appendix A.IV.

hateful thoughts nor have taken the slightest pleasure in seeing harm done to another human being. I have never wished harm on anyone, even when they really angered me. YES _____ NO _____

7. You shall not commit adultery: I have never had sex with someone outside the bonds of marriage nor have I ever entertained sexual thoughts about someone I'm not married to. YES _____ NO _____

8. You shall not steal: I have never taken anything that doesn't belong to me. This includes downloading illegal music, cheating in school, or fudging on my taxes. I have always respected the belongings, rights and creations of others and been completely truthful and fair taking only what I've earned. I have never taken extra Chick-Fil-A sauce to stock my shelves at home. I have never wasted my company's time surfing the web, Tweeting or Facebooking. I've never taken credit that didn't belong to me nor have I ever let others assume good things about me that weren't true. YES _____ NO _____

9. You shall not lie: I've never bent the truth to get out of a bad situation. I've never stretched the truth to make myself look better. I have never slandered anyone**. I have always told the truth in every situation regarding every person I have ever known, and I've always fully fulfilled any promises I've made. YES _____ NO _____

10. You shall not covet: I have never been greedy for something that wasn't mine, nor have I been jealous of the abilities, looks, position or possessions of others. I have rejoiced with others in what they have, glad that they have it even when I don't. I have never complained about what God has provided for me and always been thankful and fully content with what I have and where I am in life**. YES _____ NO _____

*OK, let's all trade with our neighbors to see how we did

¹⁷ Now if you call yourself a Jew, and rely on the law, and boast in God... ** and if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light to those in darkness... You who preach, "You must not steal" — do you steal? ²² You who say, "You must not commit adultery" — do you commit adultery? You who detest idols, do you rob their temples?

Paul says, "When you **look down into your heart motives**, don't you do the very things you tell others not to do?"

- You say, "**Don't steal**," but there's plenty of examples from your life of taking more than what belongs to you.
- You say, "**Don't commit adultery**" but you sexually fantasize about people whom you are not married to.
- This term ***robbing temples*** is clearly figurative. He doesn't mean these religious people by night dress up as vigilantes and break into churches and plunder the treasures.
 - He is **doing with this Commandment** what Jesus did with adultery in the **Sermon on the Mount** (that we saw above). He extends the command beyond outward obedience down to inward motives of the heart.
 - You say **not to worship idols**, but *you know that idol-worshipping is more than the physical act of bowing down to a statue.*
 - The **reason pagan people bow down to idols is because** they think this idol will give them prosperity. As a religious person, you may not bow down to the gold statue, but you worship prosperity just like they do. **You crave money and respect and power just as much as they do.**
 - You **may not worship the idol** but you want what is in the temple--**you rob the temple**--just like they do!

- You can see that by how much you worry about money, seek money, refuse to be generous with your money and how much you complain to God when he doesn't give it to you.³
- You could even say you *are* using God to help you in pursuit of that idol.
- You think **if you keep up your end of the bargain** God owes you that. And when he doesn't you are **furious at him: "I did my part!"**
- "You use religion to get things FROM God instead of getting more OF God."***

²³ You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? (Yes, you do) ²⁴ For, as it is written: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

- **All the Gentiles and unchurched people can see that under this thin veneer of religion** you have the same corrupt heart as everyone else.
- And, **if anything, your religion** has just made you worse.

Religiosity is like this strange disease--when you have it, it makes everyone around you want to vomit.

I told **you in the first week of this series** that Paul, in some ways, thinks religious people are the worst.

- **Tim Keller summarizes** Paul's attitude toward religiosity this way: **Religiosity, Paul says, makes people...**
- **Smug.** You just walk around with this subtle but nauseating air about you, "I have everything together. I don't have the problems you people have because I just do a better job than you and, generally speaking, a better class of person than you."
 - Ask yourself:: **When you hear about your friend's kid acting up in school**, is your gut response, "My kid would

never do that so I must be doing something right" or is it, "**Dang, parenting is impossible**" and "**my kid's got problems, too and thank God for his grace** because if not all our kids would be doomed"?

- Or **when you find out that another famous pastor** has fallen into sin, what's your first response?
 - Serves him right. I didn't like his theology anyway.
 - All famous Christians are hypocrites.
 - I should consider myself... I am made out of the same stuff as anybody
- **Overly-sensitive** (Because **your identity is built on your righteousness**, people can't ever undermine it or question it--if they do it is deeply bothersome or devastating).
 - **Ask yourself:** When someone confronts you about your sin, do you get defensive? Do you start mentally listing all the problems THEY have? Or do you receive that rebuke and legitimately ask God to help you hear it?
- **Judgmental** (You **need to find other worse** so you can feel good about yourself--so you are really critical of others, always finding fault--you are the kind of person that can point out something wrong with everyone);
 - And when you **see some fault or weakness in others**, you are not really **compassionate**. Keller: "You will be at best cold, and at worst outright condemning, toward those who are struggling. Rather than speaking words of encouragement to the struggler, helping to lift them up, you speak words of gossip about them to others, to show yourself in a comparatively good light. A sign of this condition is that people don't want to share their problems with you, and you are very defensive if others point out your problems to you."⁴

³ Cf, Keller, *Romans for You*, 57

⁴ Keller, 58.

- **Hypocritical:** Vs. 21: We have a more **theoretical-only stance toward God's Word**.
 - We like to learn **concepts of truth** more than we want to be confronted by them.
 - **Religious people like to write down concepts of truth** more than they love to be changed by concepts of truth.
 - Listen, this book was not written, Paul says, for our **information, but for our transformation**.
 - **Keller:** *"A real Christian finds the Bible 'living and active' ; when they hear it or read it, they are convicted, comforted, thrilled, disturbed, melted, slammed down, or lifted up."*⁵
- **lastly, Insecure** (You are always worried--Am I good enough? Do others consider me a good person? Does God?)⁶

WRITE IT DOWN: Any religion that doesn't begin with a deep experience of God's grace in the cross will leave you **smug, overly-sensitive, judgmental, hypocritical and insecure.**

- You say, "This sounds like all the Christians I know on Facebook."
- Yeah, but in saying that you are being equally **smug and judgmental**.

The result is irreligious people blaspheme God because of us. They dislike the God we claim to represent.

- **Remember the perspective I shared at the beginning** of the guy who said his perception of **conservative Christians** was that they were *illogical, empire-builders, prone to violence; people who cannot generally live peacefully* with those who don't believe what they believe.

- That's **not a totally inaccurate perception!** Religion produces that in us--whether **religious Jews in the 1st century** or **conservative Christians in the 21st**.

²⁵ **Circumcision benefits you if you observe the law, but if you are a lawbreaker, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.**

- **Circumcision was...** outward sign of the Jewish covenant.
 - In those days **before modern standards of cleanliness, not being circumcised** led to a lot of disease. So, circumcision was removing a source of filthiness at the very point of of new life.
 - And that's **all I've got to say about that**. Ask CP.
 - It was **an important sign of what God wanted to do in their hearts**--to remove filth and corruption at our source of life.
- In our day, we could **replace circumcision here with "baptism."**
 - Baptism is **an outward picture of the inward covenant**. Your body gets washed with water, picturing the cleansing of your heart. It's like you are being buried and brought back to life, a symbol of what is happening inside you--you are coming into spiritual life.
 - **So you got baptized**--your body was dipped in water--but does your heart show signs of being cleansed?
 - **You take communion**, but are you showing the inward effects of transforming grace? Does your life show evidence of Jesus living on the inside?
- Again, if we put you on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence from your private conversations and inward thoughts to convict you?
 - Hey listen: If your **best friend** couldn't stand up here provide compelling evidence from what you do when you are away from the church that prove you are born again, you're probably aren't.

⁵ Keller, 57.

⁶ Adapted from Keller, 59.

- If your **mom** couldn't stand up here and explain to us how she knows you are born again by observing your behavior at home in how you treat your family, it's ***might be because you never have been.***

²⁸ For a person is not a Jew (or a Christian) who is one outwardly, and true circumcision is not something visible in the flesh. (nor is baptism something that only happens on the outside or communion about getting some juice and a cracker in you). ²⁹ ...circumcision is of the heart—by the Spirit, not the letter.

Paul is saying: ***Beware religious inoculation.***

- This is one of **most important concepts for those of you who have grown up in church!**
 - **Inoculation:** give you a dead version of the disease so if you are exposed to the real thing you won't catch it.
- **To quote Keller** once more: "It is possible to trust in Christianity, rather than Christ. And this can happen in conservative, evangelical churches. Paul is showing us a condition called 'dead orthodoxy', where the basic doctrines of the Bible are accurately subscribed to, but do not make any internal difference. There is an intellectual grasp of the gospel, but no internal revolution."⁷

Paul's point: Religion can't change you. Only the gospel can. And that gospel has to be embraced DEEP in your heart.

- **Dr. Christian Bernard:** After his second transplant surgery, the patient wanted to see his old heart. So the doctor took him over to a cupboard and pulled out a jar with his old heart in it. He was the first guy in the history of the world to hold his old heart. According to the story the man said, "So this is what was giving me so much trouble?" He handed it back to the doctor, turned away and left it forever.

- **That's what Paul is encouraging us to do.** To realize we need a new heart and embrace the gospel deep in our soul so that God gives us a new heart.

So, that's the question: Have you embraced the gospel in your heart? Not, "Have you been baptized?" or "Have you joined the church?" or even "Have you prayed this prayer?"

- But, "Has the gospel traveled that 18" between your head and your heart?"
 - I've heard **that many church people will miss heaven by 18"**.
- JAG/ME

MUSIC

So, let's end with Paul's admonition to the religious, because **it is good news.** To the religious, you who have grown up in church, Paul says, 2:4 Or do you despise the riches of his kindness (in giving you THE BIBLE), restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?

- **God's word to you this weekend is not condemnation.** It's mercy. Kindness. The Father gave his Son for you so that you could be brought in!

I've heard it said that **Romans 1 and 2 basically retells the story of the prodigal son.** A man has two sons.

- One rebels against the father, rejects him outright, and runs away. Romans 1 is about him. The **younger son who flees** into the far country. He eats with **pigs**, is miserable and defiled. And the **Father is willing and eager** to receive that wandering son with open arms.
- And when he does, and **takes him into the house** and begins to pour out love and riches on his son...

⁷ Keller, 60.

The older son gets angry. How could you receive him when he has shamed you so?

- And so the **Father leaves the party to go out and look** for his older son.
- **This is the detail people overlook: the older son** is also outside the house, just like the younger son.
 - He may not have gone as far as the younger son, but he also is separated from fellowship with the Father.
- The **good news**: The **Father stands ready to receive him**, too--if he'll **only come in!** Only if he'll **admit his need of grace and embrace** the Father's mercy.
- That's where he **stands with you**.
- God **welcomes both religious and irreligious sinners** back into his family--but they have to come the **same way: *Through the cross***.

MARK IT DOWN: The only way for religious or irreligious to be saved is to **admit our need of grace and our need of a new heart** and RECEIVE THAT BY forsaking both our sin (the younger son) and our false sense of goodness (the older son) and cast ourselves on the mercy of the Father and believing that he can **forgive** all our sins, immediately, and give us a **new heart**.

The **gospel** is...

Raised hands

- tell someone
- tell a pastor
- **religious person: don't be embarrassed.** it will be a catalyst to someone else.