***Confidence of the Religious Person, No. 1
RO15-01***

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Romans 2:12 has declared to us that God is impartial, and that He is revealing it in that He judges people on the basis of their spiritual enlightenment: "For as many as have sinned without Law shall also perish without Law, and as many as have sinned in the Law shall be judged by the Law." Please open your Bibles to Romans 2:17 as we begin a new section of this book, looking at Romans 2:17-20.

The apostle Paul wrote the book of Romans in order to produce a systematic and logical explanation of Christianity and of what salvation was all about. Here is his line of reasoning, just to review where we have been and where we are going. The book begins with an introduction, which covers Romans 1:1-17. Then it has a section on condemnation, which is the section in which we have been engaged over the past few sessions. This goes from Romans 1:18 through Romans 3:20. This section is divided into four main segments. The first has to do with explaining why the immoral man is condemned. The second section within condemnation has to do with why the moral man is condemned.

We now begin a study of why the religious person is condemned. Finally, Paul sums it up in the fourth segment under condemnation that says that what this means is that everybody in the whole world that is ever born is condemned to the lake of fire. Having established that he is ready to start explaining in a logical, systematic way the great doctrine of salvation through the grace of God by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul has established that the immoral and immoral unbeliever are guilty before God, and they're destined for the lake of fire.

**The Religious Unbeliever**

Now he takes up this new category of people who are condemned by God, the religious people (the religious unbelievers). This group is often the hardest to reach because they are simply deluded by their religion. Paul uses the unsaved Jew as the example of this third category of human beings. The unsaved Jew made a splendid case history for the religious unbeliever. We will be studying from Romans 2:17 through Romans 3:8. This particular type of person, the religious unbeliever. Obviously, organized Christianity is full of people who are zealous for what they consider their revealed religion. But they are strangers to the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and they are strangers to salvation. Millions of religious people, in effect, view themselves as fully acceptable to God while his wrath actually rests upon them. That's what we're trying to show you now – that many religious people, zealous and sincere, are actually under the wrath of God.

Paul could understand this, for you will remember that he once was in this very category – a very zealously religious person upon whom the wrath of God rested. He was enthusiastic for the revealed religion of the Jews, but he himself was lost in his soul.

So, coming to Romans 2:17, we read, "But if you are called a Jew, and rest in the Law, and make your boast of God." It begins with the Jew himself. The Jew bore certain factors that he considered a personal advantage, and Paul is going to need these personal advantages that the Jew had as a religious person. Paul is not discounting the fact that these things were an advantage. What he is going to show is that having these spiritual advantages, the Jew was headed for hell. How many people have grown up in a home of great spiritual advantage, who yet are on the road to the lake of fire? Thousands upon thousands of people have had great spiritual advantage in their background, and yet they're lost.

So, the Jew has many advantages. The first one, Paul, begins here in verse 17, and that is that he is called a Jew. The word "but" is the Greek "de," This is a word that indicates a transition to a new topic. Now we are moving from the condition of the moral unbeliever to the religious unbeliever. We have dealt with the lost condition of the moral and of the immoral unbeliever. This little word says, "Now, a new topic." "But," there is a third category – one that ordinarily you would expect on the surface to have no question about the fact that he is going to heaven: the religious person.

It says, "But if." The word "if" is "ei." It is a first class condition. You know that a first class condition in Greek indicates to us that a thing is really so. He's not saying "if" as if it were a question. He is saying "if" in the sense of "since:" "Since you bear the name of Jew." There are two parts to a conditional sentence. The first part is called in grammar, the protasis or the condition. I want you to notice a little bit of a connection here. Verses 17-24 are one long conditional sentence in the Greek. It begins with the condition part, which is verses 17-20. Verses 17-20 are the "if" part of the sentence. Then you come to the second part of a conditional sentence, which is called the apodosis in Greek Grammar, or the conclusion, and that's verse 21 to 24. That answers "So what?" Since this is true about the Jews, so what is the result?

So, verses 17-20 say, "If this is true, and it is true," verses 21-24 say, "Consequently, this is the result of that fact." We're going to take a few sessions in getting through this big conditional sentence.

"If you." That's Greek word "su," and it is used in a way of emphasizing the individual Jew: "Are called." The word "are called is "eponomazo." It is present passive indicative. When it is active, it "eponomazo" means "to call by a name." But here, it is passive, and in the passive voice, it means "to bear the name." So, what he is referring to is a group of people who bear a certain name. It is in the present tense, meaning that he is always identified by this name, which is the name of Jew. As you know, a Jew is always identifiable wherever he is in any century and in any society as a Jew. He bears that mean. It is passive. It is not a name that he assumes, but one that he simply received by dint of his physical birth as a descendant of Abraham. It is indicative. It is a statement of fact.

**Jews**

The name that he bears Jew ("ioudaios" in the Greek). "Ioudaios" is the racial term that the New Testament uses for descendants of Abraham to distinguish them from all gentiles. It is the particular name to distinguish from the gentiles.

Now, being in the category of Jew meant that you were part of God's chosen earthly people. This is why the Jew considered this a great privilege and a great advantage. Mind you that we're talking about a man who is on his way to hell; he's on his way to the lake of fire; and, he is a very religious person. And one of the reasons he thinks he is all right with God is because he bears a very privileged name – the name of Jew, and all that that connotes in terms of being part of God's chosen earthly people. You are under the promises of the Abrahamic covenant, is what Paul is saying to them. But Paul is not speaking to the Jews as such, even here. Remember that he is speaking to him simply as the representative of a certain type of human being – the religious unbeliever.

So, in this context, the name "Jew" applies to the unsaved, but religious, Jewish person, and, by analogy, to anybody who lives in any age who believes that he is in a privileged category of human beings. The world today is filled, consequently, with people who are devoutly religious, but who do not trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation. This section of Bible doctrine is giving us a bit of divine viewpoint understanding, and that is that hell is going to be crowded with sincere, religious people. Don't ever forget that the lake will be overflowing with sincere religious people. And that is what this section of the Word of God is conveying to us. That's a piece of divine viewpoint. Human viewpoint says that religious people won't get anywhere near the lake of fire. Divine viewpoint says, "They're going to be overflowing it."

**Rests in the Law**

This Jew also relied on some other advantage he had. The second one that Paul lists is: "And rests in the Law. The word "and' is the Greek word "kai." This word is used here to indicate a series in this conditional clause – in this condition that he's stating. He's going to use a series of "ands:" and; and; and. So this little word "kai" keeps cropping up again and again to signal: next thing; next thing; next thing in the series. And you're going to see that he connects the whole chain together of conditions of advantage that the religious person has. Each new fact about the Jewish confidence is indicated by this "kai." So, here's another one.

This one is that he rests in something. The word "rest is "epanapauomai." This comes from the word "epi," which is the first part here, which is the preposition "upon;" and "anapauo," which means "to rest." So, we get the word "to rest upon" out of that. It is a word here that is used in the sense of relying upon something. It promotes finding comfort and support in something. What is being said here is that the Jew found a great comfort and a great support in the Mosaic Law. It is present tense, which indicates that he continually had this attitude. Though he was an unbeliever, he had great comfort in the Mosaic Law. It is in the middle tense, which means that he relied on the religious performances that he was going through under the Mosaic Law (in keeping with the Mosaic Law), and he felt that he was personally being benefited by this. So, that's why it's middle. Middle means that you receive the benefit of this personally. It's indicative. It's a statement of fact.

**Legalism**

He was relying upon the fact that he had the Mosaic Law. The word "Law" is the Greek word "nomos." This is dramatically in what we call the locative case, so it is translated as "*in* the law." This refers to a system of legalism. We have studied legalism recently, so you know that legalism does not mean rules. It does not mean regulations which you must keep. You are not legalistic if you can keep rules. Legalism means that you are keeping rules in order to make points with God, and in order to gain favor with God. The Mosaic Law was never meant to gain salvation. It was never meant to produce spirituality. When it was used in that way, it was used according to the letter of the Law, going through monkeyshines performances, and that was legalism.

In the Greek, this word has no article. It is simply "Law" by itself. It does not have the word "the" before it. Therefore, it is referring to a system of legalism. Anytime in the Koine Greek language that the writer wants to emphasize the quality of something rather than the thing itself, he drops the article. He simply drops the definite "the." And that's what he did here in the Greek. There is no "the." Therefore, he is stressing such a thing as law (legalism) – approaching on the basis of the law system.

**The Mosaic Law**

At this point, we should pause and ask ourselves specifically: what was the Mosaic Law? I don't want you to get the idea that there was something wrong or bad about the Mosaic Law. This unbelieving Jew had a great privilege in the fact that he bore the name of "Jew," and all that that connoted in the historical relationship to Abraham, and as being part of God's chosen earthly favored people.

The Jew relied upon the law. He possessed the Law. The Law itself was something very great. So, let's look at the Law. First of all, the Mosaic Law was delivered to the nation Israel directly by God, by angels, through Moses on Mount Sinai. We have this taught in Exodus 31:18, Leviticus 26:46, Acts 7:53, Galatians 3:19, and Hebrews 2:2. So, first of all, the first thing we want to recognize about the Law is that it was not man made. It came under a very dramatic condition where it was delivered through the mediation of angels. It was given to the leader of the Jewish people, Moses. It was given in the awesome surroundings of the lightning and thunder of Mount Sinai. They receive a very direct communication of divine viewpoint from God.

Secondly, the Law was given in three stages. First of all, God called Moses up to the top of the mountain, and He just sat there and He spoke with Moses, and orally, He delivered the law to Moses. This included certain things. It included, as you know, the Ten Commandments, which we have in Exodus 20:1-17. Then it included regulations concerning civil relationships in Exodus 21:1 through Exodus 23:13. It included regulations concerning three annual feasts that the nation was to remember (Exodus 23:14-19). It included directions on how they were going to conquer the land of Canaan. God is telling Moses all this. He is not writing it down, but He is just talking to him (Exodus 23:20-33).

Then Moses came down from the mountain and said, "Now I'm going to tell you what God has told me up there." And he communicated all this to the people under, no doubt, a supernatural enablement to be able to retain this in his thinking in his memory. He communicated this to the people in Exodus 24:3-8, and it was accepted by the representative leaders of the Jewish people in Exodus 24:9-11.

Then a second stage was involved in the receiving of this communication from God. After the oral discussion with Moses, Moses was taken back up to the mount again. And this time, God had written all of these instructions on two tables of stone. The finger of God had written this out in Hebrew, in two tables of stone. And He gave these two tables to Moses. We have this in Exodus 24:12-18. This included direction for the nation's worship; that is, the tabernacle; the priesthood; and, the sacrifices. All of this is covered in Exodus 25 through Exodus 31. This was added in addition to the oral instruction he had received the first time. This was now written down on the tables of stone. Moses returned and found the people back in the camp violating the first moral commandment which they knew. He had already be down, and said, "Now here's what God says. Here are ten basic moral principles that will preserve our freedom. Therefore, you must obey these principles. He no sooner turn his back and went back up to the mountain, and violating the first one with the golden calf, which broke the commandment (the principle) about false gods and images.

So, Moses, in his anger, took those two tables on which God had written all the details of the law, including the worship setup, and he just threw them on the ground in anger, and just shattered them. This is in Exodus 32:1-19. God, understanding, of course, the reason for Moses' anger then produced two more tables of stone on which all of this was again written down. This was delivered to Moses a second time (Exodus 34:1, Exodus 34:28-29, Deuteronomy 10:4).

So, in these three stages, the law was very definitively given by God.

**The Moral Code**

The law is divided into three main sections. There is, first of all, what is known as the moral code. This is referred to in the Bible as the commandments (Exodus 20:1-26). This was, of course, basically the Ten Commandments, but there were many other commandments as to what was right and wrong that the people were to do. These commandments all expressed the righteousness of God. Actually, there were, in one way or another, 613 specific directions or commandments from God included in the Mosaic code. The commandments you have recorded in Exodus 20:1-26 in their basic form of the Ten Commandments or the ten moral principles.

**The Civil Code – the Judgments**

Then there was a second section called the civil code. The civil code had to do with the social life of the Jews, and this is referred to in the Bible as the judgments you have these recorded in Exodus 21:1 through Exodus 24:11. The judgments included such things as the instruction concerning the four divine institutions; the responsibility of government (the laws for the established government – what government is for and what it's to do; certain dietary laws of things that the Jews were to eat, and things they were not to eat; medical procedures; sanitation regulations; directions for conservation of the soil; and, it established a taxation system which was 10% across the board. Whether you made $10 or $1 million in a year, you never were charged a higher rate than 10%. That was a religious tax. It was for religious purposes. The judgments also gave directions for military service, and it gave principles by which a war is to be fought. The basic principle was: "Win it."

All of this was carefully recorded in the civil code section.

**The Religious Code – the Ordinances**

Then there was a third part of the law, which was the religious code. This is referred to in the Bible as the ordinances (Exodus 24:12, Exodus 31:18). These are the rules of worship. The rules of worship pictured the work and the person of the Lord Jesus Christ as Savior. Therefore, in this section that was included the directions that had to do with the tabernacle; the holy days; the offerings; the sacrifices; and, the priesthood.

You can see by all of this that this was a very tremendous revelation to the Jewish people. This was a monumentally wonderful piece of divine viewpoint information. You could spend your life plowing through all the sections of what was written on those two tables of stone, and you'd never come to an end of your development spiritually in your depth of understanding concerning the living God. But this was all one Law. It was not three sections. You could not peel off one of these sections and go on with the others.

James 2:10-11 in the New Testament tells us that if you break one part of this Law (if you break one of these 613 regulations), you have broken the whole Law. Therefore, the Bible stresses the fact that you cannot take part of this. You have to take the whole thing. This is what Paul is leading up to. The Jew was so proud of the fact that he possessed the Law, because the Law was never given to gentiles; it was never given to pagans; and, it was never even given to Christians. It was only given to a Jew. Therefore, he was tremendously pleased with himself – that he had the unique possession of this kind of information. But what Paul is leading up to is if you break one little piece of it, you've broken the whole thing, and you're headed for the lake of fire. And you needn't argue with God and say, "God, I kept 612. I've only broken one of them. Are you going to hold that one against me when I've kept all 612 perfectly?" And the answer thunders back from the darkness of Sinai, "Yes. If you break one piece of it, the whole thing is shattered."

That's why, as Christians, we are relieved by the fact that Christ kept this Law perfectly for us and thus shoved it out of the way. You and I are never faced with the righteousness of God which is represented by these regulations.

While a person was not saved by keeping these rules, they did represent a righteousness that he had to produce. But the problem was that he couldn't produce it. Thus God taught us, and taught the Jew, the hopelessness of trying to make it on your own, even when you know what God wants you to do.

Up to this time, people could say, "Well, I don't know what God wants me to do." That's one of the things that the Bible says. When the Lord came along, it made sin a specific, deliberate breaking of a rule. Now you could no longer claim that you didn't know what it was that God wanted you to do. The Jew had something very impressive.

The Law, as God's basic method of dealing with mankind, went into operation on Mount Sinai, and it continued in operation until the death of Jesus Christ on the cross. The Law is not in effect today. It is not a system by which we or anybody else is to be living today.

**The Law Applied only to Israel**

The Mosaic Law was applicable to the nation of Israel alone (Exodus 19:3, Leviticus 26:46). It was never applied to gentiles, we're told in Deuteronomy 4:8 and in Romans 2:12-14. The law was never applied to gentiles. The Mosaic Law system was never applied to Christians in the church age (Acts 15:5, 24, Romans 6:14, Romans 8:4). That doesn't mean that Christians are lawless, because the apostle Paul a little later in this book, in Romans 8:2-4, and in another book, Galatians 5:18, is going to explain that Christians are under a higher law. That is the law of the Spirit of God who indwells us.

God the Holy Spirit calls upon us to perform everything in the form of righteousness that was represented in the Law with his three major sections. Every last jot and tittle of the law, in every respect possible, is demanded of a Christian. We have not been released as Christians from keeping what this represented of the righteousness of God. The difference is that God says, "Now I've demonstrated and I've established that a human being, trying on his own, can't keep it. He can never match up to what I require of him so that he can come to My heaven." Now he says, "I'm going to just hand the righteousness that you need over to you. But I can't do that until someone has paid the penalty for having broken this Law – until someone has paid the penalty for the fact that you have fallen short of the glory of God, and of the righteousness that this represents."

That's where the death of Christ came in. That's why the Bible says, "Jesus Christ is the end of the Law." He finished it. He put it to rest once and for all. So, those who are in Him, through the baptism of the Holy Spirit, now receive all the credit of having perfectly kept the righteousness of God, such as is represented in the Law. So, to that extent, the Mosaic Law is important to us as Christians, but it is never directly applied to us in all of its forms and ceremonies.

There are people who try to keep it as such. Seventh Day Adventists, for example, say you must not gather on Sunday. You must gather on Saturday, the seventh day, for worship. Other denominations say that the way that God wants you to give you money is through tithing. So, they pitch the tithing game instead of the game of grace giving. In one way or another, those who operate under this legalistic system are trying to defend something that no longer applies to any human being. They're actually, the Bible says, fallen from grace. And they are trying to keep something that does not apply to us at all. It is a violation of the Word of God. The law is not functioning on us in any detail.

Those, however, who do try to keep some of the principles of the Mosaic Law (who do hold to certain sections of it), do not hold to other parts of it. They don't bring animal sacrifices; they don't stone people that they find working on Saturday; and, so on. It's a totally different situation.

**Mere Human Capacity**

The Mosaic Law depended, then, as we've indicated, on the mere human capacity (the natural man with his old sin nature) for its fulfillment. The Law was not a grace way of life. It was a works way of life. It was a way of securing God's blessing by what you did. The Old Testament said, "If you behave yourself, God will bless you." The New Testament says, "God is going to bless you because of what you are in My Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore, you should behave yourself. That's the difference. The Old Testament said, "If you behave yourself, you'll be blessed." The New Testament says, "Behave yourself because you already are blessed in Christ Jesus." That's a tremendous difference. The law was not a grace way of life (Romans 10:5, Galatians 2:21, Galatians 3:10, Galatians 5:4).

This didn't mean that there was something wrong with the law. Paul, in Romans 7:12 and in Romans 7:14, specifically says that: The Law itself was: "Holy; righteous; good; and, and spiritual." You couldn't find a thing wrong with what the Law itself was saying. This is why the Jew rightly had a reason to be so proud of it. But the Bible tells us that the Law had a weakness, and Romans 8:3 explains to us that the weakness was the old sin nature. The Law was dependent upon human capacity for its fulfillment, and there never was a human being, and there never will be a human being that is able to fulfill the requirements of the Law. Only one could do it, and that was Jesus Christ. He had to do it for all of us.

So, the Law of Moses demanded a righteousness which no person could achieve. Romans 3:20: "Therefore, by the deeds of the Law, there shall no flesh be justified in His sight, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin." All the Law could do is show you how bad you are, but you could never find the capacity to correct the problem.

**The Effects of the Law**

The effects of the Law. First of all, the Bible tells us that the Law clearly declares that everybody is guilty before God (Romans 3:19). The Bible also tells us that the Law cannot provide salvation (Romans 3:20, Romans 3:28, Galatians 2:16, and Acts 13:39).

Also, the law cannot impart the absolute righteousness of God (Galatians 3:21, Philippians 3:9). In other words, it cannot justify.

The Law does something: it makes sin stand out in sharp focus for what it is. Romans 5:20; Romans 7:7-13; and, 1 Corinthians 15:56 all tell us that one thing the Law does is that it really lets us know what's wrong, and how bad sin is. It makes it stand out. The law did serve as a guide, consequently, until Jesus Christ arrived. Galatians 3:24 tells us that it was sort of like a schoolmaster; that is, a slave who used to take care of a child to see that he got school; that he behaved himself; that he got home; and, so on. He was a pedagogue, and he had to watch the youngster. That's what the Lord did for us. It kind of guided us until Jesus Christ came and solved the problem.

One thing the Law never could do is provide the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 3:2). If the Holy Spirit does not indwell you, then you can't keep the law. That was the problem for the Jew. He was indeed proud of the fact that he possessed the Law, and that was a good thing to possess. But the thing that he lacked was the indwelling power of God to fulfill it. The law, therefore, cannot provide control over the sin nature (Romans 8:3). So, when somebody comes along and says, "Well, I think the way a person gets to heaven is by keeping the Ten Commandments and obeying the golden rule," he's in a lot of trouble because he's not going to keep those Ten Commandments. There's no way that he can keep them. He's already broken them even before he expresses that opinion. And that is the point that the Law was trying to make – that it cannot give us anything but condemnation.

**Blameless**

No, it was you who broke one of his 613 regulations, was guilty of having broken the whole Law. However, as you know, the apostle Paul said that he was blameless when it came to the Law. Did that mean that he had never broken one of these 613 rules? No, obviously, it didn't know. What it meant was that when he broke something, and when he violated the Law, he immediately brought the sacrifice. Thus the Bible says that while you could not keep the Law, if you were faithful in bringing the sacrifice required to cover your sin, you would be declared blameless. You have this in Luke 1:6 in Philippians 3:6, where Paul calls himself blameless. It is because they performed the sacrifices, and thus they could have that position.

The Lord Jesus Christ, at His first Advent, fulfilled the whole Mosaic Law for the Christians. This was part of the mission of Christ on this earth. He came, Matthew 5:17 and Romans 10:4 tells us, to remove the condemnation of the Law. He fulfilled the commandments by living a perfect life. Everybody has broken one of these commandments, sooner or later. Jesus Christ fulfilled that requirement by living a perfectly sinless life (John 8:46, 2 Corinthians 5:21). Well, we have these judgments against us. He met those by perfect obedience to all civil authorities and all civil laws while He was here on earth (Matthew 22:21). He lived a perfect life relative to civil regulations.

He also had to fulfill the religious code. All these ordinances were fulfilled when he died on the cross for the sins of the world (1 Peter 2:24). They were portraying what He was going to do, and He fulfilled all three sections of the Law for us.

**Personal and National Freedom**

The ten moral principles of the Law protect personal and national freedom. That's why the Law was given to the Jews immediately when they came out of slavery in Egypt. It was to explain to them how to preserve their freedom. Therefore, the Ten Commandments are ten moral principles which are upon us to this day as representing principles of freedom reflected by the righteousness of God.

The law gave to person sin the character of a specific transgression (Galatians 3:19). You were doing something that you knew was wrong.

The law had the effect of causing the rebellious sin nature to deliberately violate the rules of God (Romans 7:8). Paul said there were certain things like covetousness that never used to bother me. But the minute I read in the Law, "You shall not covet," I found a very strange thing inside of me. Something in me was saying, "Go ahead and covet." He said, "Now, by George, if I didn't start coveting. Until I read it in the Law, it didn't bother me. Once I found that the Law said, 'Don't you do this,' it bothered me." Do you ever have a little kid at home such that you said, "Don't touch that." He smiles at you, and then you go about your business, and those sneaky little eyes are watching. Then as soon as you're out, he grabs it. What is it that makes him do that? It was the same thing in Paul – the old sin nature. Paul said, "The minute I heard from God saying 'Don't do that,' I find myself looking around when God supposedly wasn't looking, and I was doing it." It's strange, isn't it? But that's one purpose of the Law – to show how really depraved the human nature is.

**All People are Sinners**

The Law revealed that all people are sinners (Romans 3:18-20, Romans 3:23).

The law was a temporary divine arrangement until Christ came (Galatians 3:19). That's very important. The Law was never a permanent arrangement of God's dealing with people. It was always temporary. So, anybody who tries to live under the Law today is ludicrous. He doesn't understand that he's living under something that even God said from the beginning: "This is only a sometime thing."

The Law made it clear that there was no way a sinner could be saved except by faith in God's provision for him (Galatians 3:23). If there was anything that a person learned from the Law, it was that he couldn't help himself.

**Grace**

The opposite of law is grace. So, so God deals with us today in the opposite way that he dealt with the Jew.

The Law declares the whole world under a divine curse (Romans 3:19, Galatians 3:10).

The law neither justifies a sinner nor sanctifies a believer (Galatians 2:16, Galatians 3:2-3, Galatians 3:11-12). The commandments are used in Scriptures, which apply to the church, as an instruction in righteousness. Sometimes these Old Testament commandments are referred to in New Testament Scriptures as instruction in righteousness, because the Law did represent the righteousness of God. You have this in 2 Timothy 3:16-17, and you may compare with Romans 13:8-10; 1 Corinthians 9:8-9; and, Ephesians 6:1-3.

So, when the Jew said, "I'm proud of the fact that I not only have the honored name of ‘Jew,’ but I also bear a relationship to the Law, and I rely on that Law." This thing was so magnificent, and it was such a glorious reflection of the character and the essence of God, that you could see why the Jew, having this information, relied upon it. Remember that he was surrounded by pagan ignorance and darkness. He heard the same stories about Greek and Roman mythology that you study in school. When he heard that, he shook his head and said, "Boy, can you believe that? Can you believe anybody being dumb enough to listen to that and believe that kind of thing?" Why? Because he had the enlightenment of the Law. However, but his soul was lost. He prided himself on possessing a key, but he never opened the door to eternal life with that key.

Paul says, at the end of verse 17, "And make your boast of God." This was a very big thing for the Jew. He had a relationship here to the living God. Again, it starts off with "and" (the word "kai"), showing that it's the next in the series. And he has the word "makes your boast" ("kauchaomai"). We've had this word before. "Kauchaomai" my means "to glory in something." Here it connotes a religious snobbery on the part of the Jew. It is present tense. It was a constant attitude of pride, on the part of the Jew, that he was related to God. It was middle voice because he thought that he had a relationship that was a personal benefit to him. He thought it was taking him to heaven. It's indicative. It was a statement of fact. But he had a relationship, it says, that you make your glorying in a "boast of God." The word "of" is the proposition "en," which is the object of his boast.

That object was "theos," the living God. Again, there is no definite article. It is not "*the* God, but it is just "God." In other words, he said, "I am related to deity." Well, he was really no different than all the pagans in Rome and Greece. They too talked about being related to deity, and the Jew was picking up the same thing. But because he had a knowledge of the true God, he assumed that he had a relationship to this God, and that he was better than the pagans. The religious unbeliever characteristically will glory in some kind of imagined, favored position that he has with deity. This is a privileged position that he assumes he has because of his religious activities. The religious unbeliever is in trouble because he is confident that his religious activities give him something special.

So, here's the summary of verse 17. Remember the structure of this verse. It will help you to understand this section. This is an "if" condition. It's a condition of: "If this is true." And he names several things now that are true. We've looked at three of them. You are called a Jew. You are part of God's chosen earthly people. You rely on the Law. You do possess the enlightenment of the holy and righteous and perfect Lord God. You make your boast of God. You are proud that you have a relationship to God. The unbelieving person's imagined acceptance with God is false.

A little later on in this book of Romans, in Romans 9:33, the apostle Paul says, "What shall we say then – that the gentiles who followed not after righteousness, have attained to righteousness, even the righteousness which is a faith? But Israel, who followed after the law of righteousness, has not attained to the law of righteousness." Why? "Because they sought it not by faith, but as it were, by the works of the Law. For they stumbled at that stumbling stone. And the stumbling stone against whom they stumbled was, of course, Jesus Christ.

Verse 33 says, "As it is written, behold, I lay in Zion a stumbling stone and rock of a fence, and whosoever believe upon Him shall not be ashamed." So, Paul a little later explains further what he is saying here – that the reason the Jews missed eternal life is not because they were related to Abraham? That didn't send them to the lake of fire. It was not because they were relying upon some guidance from the Law. That didn't send them to the lake of fire. It was not because they were proud of the fact that they had a relationship with the living God. Obviously, they did have a national relationship. That didn't send them to the lake of fire. But they missed an important point – that salvation is by faith in what God can do for you to achieve the righteousness that the Law demanded. When they noticed that, it didn't matter how religious they were, and everything else they did. They were hopelessly lost, and destined for that lake of fire. That is the point that you have to make to all unbelieving religious people you know, because they are confident that they are better than nonreligious people, and they are not. The religious unbeliever was deluded here in thinking that keeping the Mosaic Law would give him a relationship with God. And the point of the apostle Paul is that he was wrong. He was hopelessly wrong.

Now, he's not through yet. In verse 18, we pick up another series of very important privileges that we'll look at next time that were true again of the Jews. But the thing that is interesting is that, after these privileges are stated, verse 19-20 then give us a consequence of the Jews' attitude – his confidence in the fact that he was privileged in a relationship with God. He considered himself a great and enlightened leader. As Paul says in verse 19, he viewed himself as a leader of the blind.

I find this very interesting. I've gotten a few letters from our Nolan tape special. I've noticed a couple or three times, in just a few letters, that we have been accused of being blind. The question is: "Why are you so blind? Read your Bible and you will see how the Christians have spoken in tongues, and how God has healed." I couldn't help thinking of this passage as I read the letters: "How can you be so blind?" These people who are writing me a letter are actually trying to be leaders of the blind. I'm the blind, and they are the enlightened ones.

That is exactly what Paul is talking about here. These Jews were so sure they understood God's thinking, that they could lead these poor blind pagans around them to a knowledge of God. So, as Paul goes through this section, you can see how there begins to come to boiling point in the Jew. You can begin to hear his teeth beginning to be clenched and grind together. You can begin to hear him talking under his breath, and starting to call Paul names, because Paul is sticking a pin in all their pompous, assumed relationship of superiority religiously to God. He just burst the whole balloon. And suddenly the unbelieving Jew sees himself with all of his privileges in that embarrassing position that Jesus Christ told the Jewish people what happened to them, when the Lord said, "You, who are of Israel, who are privileged to come into the kingdom of God, are going to be left out. And do you know who's going to be in there? The dogs of the gentiles, because the gentiles have come by faith, making no pretense of being something, and casting themselves upon My grace. I'm taking them. You proud people of your religious practices – I'm leaving you outside."

If you can get that over to your unsaved, smug, religious friends, you will have done them a great service. You will have turned them in the direction of eternal life. As long as they're complacent in their religious practices, they'll never make one step toward heaven. But once you have alerted them to the hopelessness upon which they are depending, then they have a chance.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1975

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[**Back to the Bible Questions index**](http://www.christiandataresources.com/allarticles.htm)