

## "Hypocrisy Gets an Audit"

Romans 2:17-29

### I. Introduction

- A. 25 percent of the American public is afraid of being audited; nobody really likes auditors
  - 1. In this passage, Paul acted as an auditor commissioned by the Holy Spirit
  - 2. Paul used the word *profitable*, which means *valuable* or *to gain something*
- B. Jesus used the word *hypocrite* frequently
  - 1. Matthew 6:5
  - 2. Matthew 23:27
  - 3. An unbeliever wearing a mask—an unsaved person disguised as a saved person—is a hypocrite (see 2 Timothy 3:5)
- C. Paul addressed those who had a Jewish background, and he anticipated an objection
  - 1. In the first chapter of Romans, he wrote to those who did disgraceful things
  - 2. In the beginning of chapter 2, he wrote about the religious crowd, addressing their assets, deficits, and ultimate appraisal

### II. The Assets

- A. The Right Background (v. 17)
  - 1. God's chosen people—the Jewish nation—took pride in the name *Jew*
    - a. This is a shortened form of *Judah*, which means *praise to YHWH*; of all the people on earth, God chose them to give Him praise
    - b. Many Jews who lived in Gentile cities used it as a second surname
    - c. Paul called himself "a Hebrew of the Hebrews" (Philippians 3:5)
  - 2. Paul acknowledged their background and spiritual heritage
    - a. However, a good thing can be a bad thing if it keeps you from the best thing
    - b. They stood behind the name *Jew* and relied on their background for salvation
      - i. They thought they were safe simply because they were Jews
      - ii. Many people today consider themselves Christians because of their own family heritage or cultural background (see Matthew 3:9)
- B. The Right Book (v. 18)
  - 1. The Jewish people had the Law—the first five books of Moses—but Paul was also referring to the Old Testament in its entirety (the Tanakh)
  - 2. Of all the people in the world, God gave the Jews His oracle (see Romans 3:2)
  - 3. Jewish children were taught the Scriptures from an early age:
    - a. The Sh'ma at age three (from Deuteronomy 6:4-5)
    - b. The Hallel at age five (Psalm 113-118)
    - c. Reading and writing the Torah at age six
    - d. Bar mitzvah for boys at age thirteen; bat mitzvah for girls at age twelve
      - i. *Bar mitzvah* means *son of the commandment*

- ii. After bar mitzvah, the boys would wear tefillin or phylacteries (small leather boxes containing Scripture—reminders to keep the Law) on their forehead and left arms

C. The Right Business (vv. 19-20)

1. God's original design for Israel was for her to become an exporter of truth to the world (see Genesis 22:18)
2. God's chosen people were to be God's responsible people
  - a. Being chosen, they were also responsible—their business was to be ambassadors of truth to the world
  - b. Being instructed, they were to instruct; being taught, they were to teach; being enlightened, they were to enlighten
  - c. Isaiah 42:6
  - d. Matthew 5:14-16
  - e. Christians who never witness are like kids shining flashlights in each other's eyes; the purpose of a flashlight is to lead people out of darkness
  - f. We must take the light where the light really counts—we have to be exporters of truth

III. The Deficits

A. The Wrong Practice (vv. 21-23)

1. They had the right background and the right book, but they didn't practice it; in theological terms, they had the orthodoxy but not the orthopraxy
2. Their behavior did not match their beliefs
  - a. Paul provided a spiritual spreadsheet; they had the right profession, but the wrong practice
  - b. Matthew 7:21
3. Jesus has a lot of fans, but not as many followers as you might think; we need to follow Him with the right practice to match the profession

B. The Wrong Prominence (v. 24)

1. They were known for the wrong thing
  - a. A hypocrite gives God a bad name; for a Jew to live differently than he preached would make a non-Jew dismiss the claims of the Jew
  - b. Paul called them out just as Nathan called David out (see 2 Samuel 12:14)
2. When a believer falls into sin, his witness is ruined, God's name is sullied, and the world will then be justified in ridiculing Christians

C. The Wrong Perspective (vv. 25-28)

1. Circumcision was meant to be an outward sign of an inward change—the sign of a commitment to God and a covenant with God
  - a. The ritual of circumcision was meant to point to the reality of following God
  - b. But if you have the ritual that points to the reality of following God, but you don't follow God, all you have is an empty ritual
2. They had begun to view the ritual of circumcision as a sort of insurance policy against God's wrath; the ceremony became a substitute for obedience
  - a. Deuteronomy 10:16

- b. When we wear masks, we can do a lot of things that look great, but there may not really be life underneath
  - c. Your baptism or church membership is useless if your heart isn't in it
- IV. The Net Appraisal (v. 29)
- A. The only one you need approval of your life from is the one who matters most—God
    - 1. In the end, He's the only one who judges according to truth
    - 2. He sees it all and knows it all, and He will be the one who approves or disapproves of your life
  - B. It doesn't matter what people think—what matters is what God thinks of you
- V. Conclusion
- A. In Romans 1, Paul showed that no one is so bad that he can't be saved; in Romans 2, he showed that no one is so good that he doesn't need to be saved
  - B. We all need the same thing: God's grace
  - C. If you're making the right speech but missing the right stuff, you won't be approved
    - 1. So many people will be shocked at the end of days when they stand before God at the great white throne judgment and Jesus says to them, "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:23)
    - 2. Don't be whitewashed—be washed white with the blood of Jesus Christ

**Figures referenced:** Howard Carter, Luke Goodrich, Jesse James

**Cross references:** Genesis 22:18; Deuteronomy 6:4-5; 10:16; 2 Samuel 12:14; Psalm 113-118; Isaiah 42:6; Matthew 3:9; 5:14-16; 6:5; 7:21, 23; 23:27; Romans 3:2; Philippians 3:5; 2 Timothy 3:5

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