

# DEVOTIONAL

WHEN IN ROME II // NO BLOODLINE  
JULY 4, 2021

GRACE  
FELLOWSHIP

**Discussion Starter:** Why are people who are religious but not followers of Christ often the most difficult to share the gospel with?

**Key Text:** *“But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God<sup>18</sup> and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;<sup>19</sup> and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,<sup>20</sup> an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—<sup>21</sup> you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal?<sup>22</sup> You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?<sup>23</sup> You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.<sup>24</sup> For, as it is written, ‘The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.’<sup>25</sup> For circumcision indeed is of value if you obey the law, but if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.<sup>26</sup> So, if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?<sup>27</sup> Then he who is physically uncircumcised but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision but break the law.<sup>28</sup> For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.<sup>29</sup> But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man but from God.”*  
(Romans 2:17-29)

## Religious but Lost

In the book *Beyond News of the Weird*, Chuck Shepherd reports: “In 1980, two men attempted to rob a bank in Larkspur, California. When the police arrived, the robbers fled on foot. The two men climbed a chain-link fence outside town to evade police who were following them, only to discover that the fence was the outer perimeter of San Quentin Prison! Guards soon arrested them.”

Just as these robbers thought they were getting away but ended up putting themselves into prison, Paul points out to his Jewish readers that there’s no escaping the reality that we are all sinners and trying to evade God by relying on Moses’ Law only serves to confirm our lost condition.

In our text for today, Paul addresses, in particular, the Jewish person who is relying on working to obey Moses’ Law for salvation. However, Paul’s words could apply to anyone who is relying on religion to save them. Religion is our attempt to get to God through our own means; Christianity is God reaching down to us and providing the means for our salvation through faith in Christ.

**Discuss:** The Jewish people thought their name alone was an instant passport to heaven: “Regardless of what I believe or do, if I’m a Jew I’ll make it to heaven.” How would you respond to someone who says, “I’m a Christian because I’m a member of a church”? Or “I’m a Christian because I was raised in a Christian family”?

Paul gives three characteristics of the person who is religious but lost:

### **The religious but lost person thinks he has special status with God.**

*“You call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God”* (v.18a). Quite often, we find that religious people are the most prideful people in the world. In our text, the Jews felt that they had an inside track to God just because they were Jewish. But Jesus never taught that a person’s religion, bloodline, or family would get them to heaven. Many times, Jesus had to bypass a religious establishment in order to get His message of truth and grace across.

**Discuss:** In what ways can religious baggage keep a person from knowing Christ?

### **The religious but lost person depends on rules and regulations for salvation.**

*“... [you] rely on the law...”* (v.18). The Jews believed that they possessed salvation simply because Moses’ Law (the Torah or Pentateuch—first five books of the Old Testament) had been given to Israel. Jesus spoke to Jews who were living under this mistaken idea when He said, *“You search the Scriptures because you think that in them you have eternal life; and it is they that bear witness about me, <sup>40</sup> yet you refuse to come to me that you may have life”* (John 5:39-40).

**Discuss:** What are some rules and regulations many people believe they must follow in order to know God?

### **The religious but lost person looks down on others who are less holy.**

*“If you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, <sup>20</sup> an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— <sup>21</sup> you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? <sup>22</sup> You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? <sup>23</sup> You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law”* (v.19-23).

These self-absorbed, sanctimonious hypocrites were religious “know-it-alls”—they took great pride in correcting others when they themselves believed they were above correction. God had not given the Jews His Word so they could strut around and show off, but so they could share it with others.

In verses 28-29, Paul contrasts outward practice with inward attitude. Outwardly, circumcision was meant to be a symbol of commitment to God. But Paul says the outward symbol means nothing if there is no inward commitment to the Messiah.

**Discuss:** In what ways do we see condescending attitudes among religious people toward others today?

### **For Further Study:**

“What is Judaism and What Do Jews Believe?” article at [www.gotquestions.org](http://www.gotquestions.org)

“What Do Messianic Jews Believe?” article at [www.christianity.com](http://www.christianity.com)