

BOB HALLMAN - THE EPIC LIFE

The Fruit of Hypocrisy

Romans 2:17-29

2000

Introduction

In chapters 1 and 2, Paul has shown that both Jew and Gentile alike, are guilty before God. In the second half of chapter 2, Paul strips away the hypocritical and legalistic false securities of the religious Jews of that day.

Illustration: Ray Comfort's style of evangelism that addresses the conscience of the person.

(Living Waters, <https://www.youtube.com/thewayofthemaster/videos>)

I The Foundation Of Their Hypocrisy

A. They relied on their **nationality**

Jew = "Praise or praiseworthy"

The Jews considered this title and its meaning an appropriate and well-deserved description of themselves.

Matt 3:7-10 "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire."

Application:

In a similar way, there are millions of people today who consider themselves safe from God's judgment by virtue of their nationality:

Yugoslavian woman who knew she wasn't a Muslim, or a part of the Orthodox Church, so assumed she was a Christian.

Also, Ireland, Sudan, Kosovo, etc.

B. They relied on the Law

Because the rabbis realized that it was impossible for anyone to keep all of God's laws perfectly, some began to teach that just learning the facts of the law was sufficient to please God. Some went as far as to teach that simply possessing the Law was grounds for confidence that they would inherit eternal life.

This makes about as much sense as someone confident of eternal life based on the fact that they have a family Bible on the coffee table at home.

Ps 147:19-20 "He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel.
He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws."

B. They bragged about their **relationship** to God

The Jews were the chosen people of God. But not for the reasons they imagined. They actually convinced themselves that they were God's chosen people by virtue of their inherent value and righteousness. Nothing could be further from the truth.

Deut 9:5-6 "It is not because of your righteousness or your integrity that you are going in to take possession of their land; but on account of the wickedness of these nations, the LORD your God will drive them out before you ... Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people."

D. They thought they knew God's will

Unfortunately, the Jews were satisfied with simply knowing God's law and His will, even though they failed to obey it.

They knew what God required and what He forbade, what He commanded and what He prohibited, what He approved and what He disapproved, what He rewarded and what He punished. But rather than saving them, that knowledge became the basis of judgment against them.

Titus 1:16 "They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him."

E. They approved of what was superior

Approve = Dokimazo = "To test or examine"

The Jews, by virtue of their access to the God's Word, believed themselves to be the guardians of truth and the only ones capable of making superior moral and ethical judgments.

1 Thess 5:21 "Test everything. Hold on to the good."

F. They were **instructed** by the Law

Instructed = Katecheo = "Catechism" = "Teaching through repetition"

Rom 15:4 "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

G. They convinced that they were:

1. A **guides** for the spiritually blind

But because their arrogant pride and blatant hypocrisy, Jesus repeatedly accused them of being "blind guides" - Matt 23:16-26

Matt 15:14 "Leave them; they are blind guides. If a blind man leads a blind man, both will fall into a pit."

2. A lights for the those in spiritual darkness

In fact, in Is 49:6 God made it clear that His purpose for Israel was that they would be a spiritual "light to the Gentiles", in order to bring His "salvation to the ends of the earth."

But they had no interest in sharing the blessings of God with other nations.

Application: The church is now the light of the world!

Matt 5:14-16 "You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven."

3. **Instructors** of the spiritually foolish

Because the Jews considered themselves spiritually superior to other nations, they naturally considered themselves to be competent teachers to the spiritually ignorant.

1 Tim 1:7 "They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm."

4. Teachers of spiritual infants

Matt 23:15 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You travel over land and sea to win a single convert, and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell as you are."

II The Fruit Of Their Hypocrisy

A. They were guilty of **hypocrisy**

God is not impressed by correct theology and neither is the world. But both take notice when a man or a woman's life reflects correct theology.

Unfortunately, the Jews were like politicians or law enforcement officials whose lives and conduct are in direct contradiction with the laws they have sworn to uphold and enforce.

Matt 23:3 "So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what they do, for they do not practice what they preach."

1. They preached against **stealing**

a. But were guilty of stealing

1. From one another

- a. Cheating the needy and poor - Amos 8:4-6
- b. Accepting bribes and charging excessive interest - Ezek 22:12
- c. Teaching and prophesying for money - Micah 3:11

Matt 21:13 "It is written," he said to them, "'My house will be called a house of prayer,' but you are making it a 'den of robbers.'"

2. From God

Mal 3:8-9 "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse-- the whole nation of you-- because you are robbing me."

Application:

The average Christian tithes only 1-2% of the income! They are robbing God and many are under a curse because of it!

Mal 3:10 "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it."

2. They preached against **adultery**

a. But they committed adultery

1. Physical adultery

The Jewish leaders created a loophole to justify adultery. That loophole was a written divorce. But not divorce for biblical reasons, but simply for the purpose of dumping their wife in favor of someone they were more attracted to.

Jer 5:7-9 "Why should I forgive you? ... I supplied all your needs, yet you committed adultery and thronged to the houses of prostitutes. You are well-fed, lusty stallions, each neighing for another man's wife. Should I not punish you for this?" declares the LORD. "Should I not avenge myself on such a nation as this?"

Illustration: Jimmy Swaggart

2. Spiritual adultery

James 4:4 "You adulterous people, don't you know that friendship with the world is hatred toward God? Anyone who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God."

3. They preached against **idolatry**

a. But they robbed temples

Evidently, it was not uncommon for Jews to pillage the temples of idols in the name of God. But their underlying motive was not spiritual but carnal – not for the honor of God, but for their own personal gain.

Acts 19:37 “You have brought these men here, though they have neither robbed temples nor blasphemed our goddess.”

4. They bragged about the Law

Acts 7:52-53 “Was there ever a prophet your fathers did not persecute? They even killed those who predicted the coming of the Righteous One. And now you have betrayed and murdered him--you who have received the law that was put into effect through angels but have not obeyed it.”

a. But dishonored God by breaking it

James 1:22 “Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says.”

B. They were guilty of **stumbling** unbelievers

Paul ends his relentless cross examination with the shocking accusation that the ...

a. Gentiles blasphemed God because of them

The name of God, Yahweh, which the Jews considered so holy they refused to even pronounce it, had become the cause of Gentile blasphemy!

Application:

When a believer commits sin, his witness is ruined and the name of the Lord is ridiculed by the world. For many of us, this kind of hypocritical behavior was a significant reason for the long delay in our eventual reception of Jesus Christ. What a heavy and terrifying responsibility a person carries if they claim to be a believer and yet, through their actions and attitudes, turn others away from the Savior.

Matt 18:7 “Woe to the world because of the things that cause people to sin! Such things must come, but woe to the man through whom they come!”

1 Cor 10:32-33 "Do not cause anyone to stumble -- even as I try to please everybody in every way. For I am not seeking my own good but the good of many, so that they may be saved."

III The Foolishness Of Their Hypocrisy

A. They misunderstood the **value** of circumcision - Gen 17:10-14

The significance of circumcision:

1. An identification of God's covenant people
2. An outward sign of an inward reality
3. An illustration of God's approach to dealing with the flesh

Circumcision was meant to be an outward sign of an inward transformation. It was a graphic symbol of the importance of cutting away the sinful nature. It was to a Jew what a wedding ring is to a marriage. Circumcision was of great value and significance if a Jew understood and lived out its intended significance. But, if its genuine meaning was disregarded, it was as meaningless as a wedding ring on an adulterer's finger.

Application:

Religious people today are guilty of the same error. They mistakenly put their confidence in:

Water baptism, confirmation classes, communion, being born in a Christian home, being a part of a certain denomination, and as sacrilegious as this might sound, "praying the sinners prayer."

These are all outward symbols -- expressions of an inward faith. But apart from a changed heart and life, these religious symbols have no spiritual value whatsoever.

I would suggest to you that the "Sinners' Prayer" has become evangelical Christianity's version of Jewish circumcision. We have turned it into a "magical" spiritual cure. Simply by repeating the words, whether or not we continue to walk with God, we will be absolutely assured of eternal life. Like circumcision for the Jew, I believe the Sinner's Prayer has meaning only in that it is an outward expression of an inner faith and work of God.

2 Cor 13:5 "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves."

The 1 John Test: A simple test to see whether your faith is genuine:

1. Do you believe that Jesus is the Messiah? - 1 Jn 4:15; 5:1
2. Do you obey God's Word? - 1 Jn 2:3-4; 3:24
3. Do you walk as Jesus did? - 1 Jn 2:28
4. Do you do what is righteous? - 1 Jn 2:29; 3:7,10
5. Do you continue in unrepentant, habitual sin? - 1 Jn 3:6, 9; 5:18
6. Do you love others with God's love? - 1 Jn 3:14-15; 4:7-8
7. Do you overcome the world? - 1 Jn 5:4-5

On the Day Of Judgment, I believe literally millions of seemingly religious people (even apparently Christian people--people who have prayed the sinners' prayer) will stand in utter shock and unbelief when they hear the Lord say, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!' Matt 7:22-23

1. It had value if the law was observed

Gal 6:13 "Not even those who are circumcised obey the law."

2. It was useless if the law wasn't observed

Gal 5:6 "For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."

B. They misunderstood the **evidence** of true "circumcision"

1. It was evidenced by obedience to the law

1 Cor 7:19 "Circumcision is nothing and uncircumcision is nothing. Keeping God's commands is what counts."

2. It was evidenced by a **changed** heart

Jer 4:4 "Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, circumcise your hearts, you men of Judah and people of Jerusalem, or my wrath will break out and burn like fire because of the evil you have done-- burn with no one to quench it."

a. Not an outward work of the flesh

Col 2:11 "In him you were also circumcised, in the putting off of the sinful nature, not with a circumcision done by the hands of men but with the circumcision done by Christ."

b. But an inward work of the Holy Spirit

Circumcision only was significance only if it was accompanied by a heart to please God and a lifestyle of obedience to His commands. The true mark of "circumcision" is not found in an outward symbol, but in a changed heart.

Deut 30:6 "The LORD your God will circumcise your hearts and the hearts of your descendants, so that you may love him with all your heart and with all your soul, and live."

1 Sam 16:7 "The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart."

3. It was evidenced by **right** priorities

a. Not seeking praise from men

Matt 23:57 "Everything they do is done for men to see: They make their phylacteries wide and the tassels on their garments long; they love the place of honor at banquets and the most important seats in the synagogues; they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'"

b. But seeking **praise** from God

John 5:44 “How can you believe if you accept praise from one another,
yet make no effort to obtain the praise that comes from the only God?”

Conclusion:

In this chapter Paul correctly diagnoses the problem and will explain the remedy in chapters to come. Even though this passage highlights the hypocrisy of the Jews, let's not forget they were chosen by God and God will still accomplish His purposes among the Jews. In the last days, all Israel will be saved.

We need to fall in love with Jesus all over again. Illustration of marriage (not just being faithfully but maintaining intimacy). Let God have His way, make him the Lord of your life.

2 Cor 13:5 "Examine yourselves to see whether you are in the faith; test yourselves."
Take the 1 John test!