

WHY "RELIGION" CAN'T SAVE YOU

Romans 2:17-29

Part 5

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I. Overview

In the first major section of Romans 1:18-3:20, Paul makes the convincing case that everyone has sinned, and therefore needs forgiveness and salvation from God. Paul identified 3 categories of people who have sinned:

- The "Rebellious" 1:18-32
- The "Respectable" 2:1-16
- The "Religious" 2:17-29

Definition of Religion: **Religion is man's best attempt to get to God**

II. EIGHT CHARACTERISTICS OF THE "RELIGIOUS" PERSON -- Romans 2:17-29

- They depend on a label V 17a
- They rely on rules and regulations. V 17b
- They think that they have special status with God. V 17 c
- They claim to have a pipeline to God V 18a
- They maintain a high moral standard. V 18b
- They have a condescending attitude toward others. V 19-20
- They don't always practice what they preach. V 21-23

The negative effects of religion V 24

- God's name is blasphemed

Two things to remember

1. It's not our duty to make people be religious. It's our duty to share Christ with them.
2. Never expect an unbeliever to act like a believer until he is one.

- They rely on rituals. V 25-29

Who is a real Jew?

"If you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise." Galatians 3:29

"A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God."

Romans 2:28-29

The Roman Road to Salvation

1. **Everyone needs salvation because we have all sinned.**

Romans 3:10-12, and 23

As the Scriptures say, “No one is righteous—not even one. No one is truly wise; no one is seeking God. All have turned away; all have become useless. No one does good, not a single one.” ... For everyone has sinned; we all fall short of God’s glorious standard

2. **The price (or consequence) of sin is death.**

Romans 6:23

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life through Christ Jesus our Lord. [\(NLT\)](#)

3. **[Jesus Christ](#) died for our sins. He paid the price for our death.**

Romans 5:8

But God showed his great love for us by sending Christ to die for us while we were still sinners.

4. **We receive salvation and eternal life through faith in Jesus Christ.**

Romans 10:9-10, and 13

If you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved. For it is by believing in your heart that you are made right with God, and it is by confessing with your mouth that you are saved ... For “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

5. **Salvation through Jesus Christ brings us into a relationship of peace with God.**

Romans 5:1

Therefore, since we have been made right in God’s sight by faith, we have peace with God because of what Jesus Christ our Lord has done for us

Romans 8:1

So now there is no condemnation for those who belong to Christ Jesus.

6. **Romans 8:38-39**

And I am convinced that nothing can ever separate us from God’s love. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither our fears for today nor our worries about tomorrow—not even the powers of hell can separate us from God’s love. No power in the sky above or in the earth below—indeed, nothing in all creation will ever be able to separate us from the love of God that is revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.

Responding to Romans Road

If you believe Romans Road leads to the path of truth, you can respond by receiving God’s free [gift of salvation](#) today. Here’s how to take a personal journey down Romans Road:

1. Admit you are a sinner.
2. Understand that as a sinner, you deserve death.
3. Believe Jesus Christ died on the [cross](#) to save you from [sin](#) and death.
4. Repent by turning from your old life of sin to a [new life](#) in Christ.
5. Receive, through faith in Jesus Christ, his free gift of salvation.

WHY "RELIGION" CAN'T SAVE YOU

In this first major section of Romans, chapter 1:18 - 3:20 Paul makes the convincing case that everybody has sinned. The first section of Romans is answering the question, "Why do I need to be saved?" He says everybody has sinned therefore we all need forgiveness and salvation from God. In this passage of Paul's writings, the first three chapters of Romans, Paul identifies three different types of people who need forgiveness, who need to be saved.

- They are the rebellious person,
- the respectable person
- and the religious person.

1. We've already looked at two of these. In the first chapter we looked at the **rebellious person**. These are the people who rebel against God outwardly, they reject God, they repress the truth, they reject the truth, they replace the truth. Intellectually they rebel against God and we saw how morally they rebel against God to do their own thing in sexual immorality and perversions. Paul says they were guilty of two kinds of sins: godlessness which is living as though God doesn't exist and wickedness which means living without rules. There is a certain group of people in the world who just kind of say, "Forget God! I'm going to do my own thing." They're rebellious, godless, they live without rules. Paul says those people need salvation.

2. Then he deals with the second kind of person in 2:1-16. This is **the respectable person**. This is the guy who says, "I'm a decent citizen. I'm law abiding. I'm better than those so-and-sos in chapter 1. I'm no pervert!" They feel superior. They're quick to judge people whose sins are more open and gross. We looked at that person and looked at four characteristics of the self righteous person. We saw the fact that only God has the right to judge people; we don't.

3. Then Paul says there is one more group of people who probably think "I'm not just a moral person -- I'm religious." He uses the Jews as the example because that's what Paul was. He says that these are the people who are trusting religion to save them.

This is the hardest group to reach with the gospel -- the religious person. Often the rebellious person gets to the end of their rope, their life is falling apart, they're an alcoholic, everything has gone wrong and they're quick to admit their need. The guy on skid row is pretty quick to admit "I have made a mess of my life!" They are often the easiest people to reach. A little more difficult are the respectable people in the next chapter. They're the people who'll say, "I'm a good moral person so I don't need Christ. I'm better than so and so."

They are a little bit harder to reach. They say they keep the Ten Commandments. [Ask them to name the Ten Commandments. Ninety- five percent of the people in America can't even name the Ten Commandments, let alone keep them.]

But by far the religious person is the hardest person to reach with the gospel. He is trying to work his way to heaven and he's trusting his religion to save him. Paul points out that you can be religious and lost. You can be a church member and still be headed for damnation.

Definition of religion: Religion is man's best attempt to get to God. The Bible compares religion with a relationship. It's a relationship to God that saves us.

A relationship is God's attempt to get to man. We find that in Jesus Christ.

In this chapter 2:17ff, Paul deals specifically with the Jewish religion because he was a Jew. But the principles apply to anybody who thinks that his religion can save him. You could substitute the words "church member" here and it would apply. the purpose of this section is to show that religion without Christ will not get you to heaven. It will not save you. It will not get you right with God.

Paul starts off by giving **eight characteristics of the religious person.**

1. They depend on a label.

Paul says in verse 17, *"If you call [name, claim] yourself a Jew you think you're going to make it to heaven."*

The Jews thought that their name was an instant passport to heaven. Regardless of what they did, if I'm a Jew, I'm going to make it! Pride of tradition. The word Jew comes from the word Judah. It's first used in 2 Kings 16:6. Judah literally means "praise to God" or praise. So the word Jew means a praiser or he who praises God.

The Jews, if anybody, loved to depend on their label. If you asked them "Are you right with God?" they'd say, "Of course! I'm a Jew!"
Do we have people doing that today? Sure.

- Just ask "Are you a Christian?" and people will immediately answer, "Of course. I'm Presbyterian" or Baptist or Assembly of God.
- Or my parents were Christians or my grandparents were missionaries or my uncle is a pastor as if you could become a Christian by osmosis.

Kind of soaks in, a heritage. Today you could insert the **term "church member"**.

- "Are you a Christian?" "Of course, **I go to church.** I attend such and such church" as if that label will make you an instant Christian.

There are a lot of labels today: I'm a fundamentalist, dispensationalist, charismatic, full gospel.

One guy told me he was a Christian because he was an American. America is a Christian nation, he is an American, therefore he was a Christian.

Going to church will make you a Christian about as much as going to a chicken house will make you a chicken or going to a Lions club will make you a lion, or going to the Rotary club will make you a roter.

It isn't membership... it isn't a label that makes you a believer. But the first characteristic we see is that they call **themselves something.**

2. They rely on rules and regulations. V 17c

"You rely on the law..." He's talking about the first five books of the Old Testament, commonly called the Pentateuch -- penta meaning five. These were the first five books written by Moses: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. The Jews call those five books the Torah.

The fact is the law has never saved anybody. Galatians teaches that that is not its purpose. The Jews felt that simply because they had the law given to their nation that made them believers, that they possessed instant salvation whether they obeyed it or not. Simply because they possessed these books they felt like they were going to make it to heaven.

John 5:39-40 Jesus is speaking to a group of Pharisees who thought they were going to make it on their own works. *"You diligently study the Scriptures because you think that, by them, you possess eternal life. These are the scriptures that testify about Me and yet you refuse to come to Me to have life."* Jesus was saying, You think you're going to get to heaven just because you have the Bible.

We have this today. You ask people, Are you a Christian? They might answer, "Sure, I own a Bible" as if just because they own a Bible and it's setting on the coffee table, unopened in five years... they think they're going to make it. People even brag about the translation they have. "Of course I'm a Christian! I use the King James version!" You have to do more than just own a Bible. You have to practice it.

3. They think that they have special status with God.

"You call yourself a Jew, you rely on the law, and brag about your relationship to God." **Sometimes the most prideful people in the world are religious people.** They brag about their relationship. **The Jews felt that they had an inside track to God. They felt that because they were the chosen people, they had special status, "God likes us and doesn't like everybody else, then we are the cool group."**

Have you ever met anybody who said, **"We're the only religion. My denomination is the only group of true believers. Everyone else is false."** That's a trait of religion.

Jesus has nothing to do with religion except that He's against it.

Jesus taught that religion would never get people to heaven. It's the relationship that gets you to heaven not any religion. The Jews felt very secure. They thought, "We can't do anything wrong. We have this religion." When you study the scriptures you find that God often bypasses a religious establishment to get His message across. When God wanted to announce Jesus' birth did He go tell the priests? No. Who did He first appear to? Shepherds. The low life of society. He bypassed the high priests, the rabbis, the teachers, the denominational groups. When God wanted to get the message out it says, *"The word of God came to John the Baptist."* Who was John the Baptist? A nobody. He wasn't part of the religious establishment. And God often does that. He can't get His message through to religious people because they think they've got special status.

"If you call yourself a Jew, if you rely on the law, if you brag about your relationship to God and if you know His will."

4. They claim to have a pipeline to God. 2 V 18

Religious people claim to have a pipeline to God. "We know his will!" Because the Jews had God's word, they knew His will! The all important word is "if" -- "*if you know His will*". **When Paul said this he was being sarcastic.** He's setting them up. You guys think you've got it together: you've got the label, you've got the name, you've got the pipeline to God. He's setting them up for a fall. **He's saying it's not enough to know God's will, you've got to do it. It's not enough just to know the law, you've got to obey it.**

"...you approve of what is superior because you're instructed by the law."

Philippians 1:10. We have the exact same phrase. It's only used twice in the Bible. In Romans it's translated, "you approve what is superior" in Philippians 1:10 it says "*that you may be able to discern what is best.*" He's talking about values, priorities.

5. They maintain a high moral standard.

There's nothing wrong with that. This is good. You ought to maintain a high moral standard, a strong code of ethics, approve what is superior. You ought to go for the best in life and have a high standard of integrity. But moral integrity will not get you to heaven. Values and priorities are good but they are not enough to get you to heaven.

The Jews (and a lot of religious people) felt like they were superior because of their moral ethics. "I don't need to go to church; I'm better than so and so." -- as if God is going to grade on the curve. "You'd never catch me doing that! I don't do those kinds of things!" The Jews and religious people often have a high moral standard. Why? He says, "*Because you are instructed by the law.*" They had been reading God's word. God's word teaches that we are to be people of integrity. We are to be ethical people. Many of the Jews had the first five books of the Bible memorized. They had a lot of head knowledge and they were Bible students. But Bible knowledge will not get you to heaven.

Paul is systematically tearing down every prop that religious people think will get them a passport into heaven. They thought "I'm not like that immoral person and pervert in chapter one. I'm better than the moral person in chapter two who doesn't know God but lives a clean life. I'm a religious person. I do works. I try to please God by what I do. I read the Bible and I'm instructed by the law." All of these privileges were things the Jews took pride in.

"If you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind and a light for those who are in the dark and an instructor of the foolish and a teacher of infants because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth... you who teach others do you not teach yourself."

Compare the terms religious people use for themselves and the terms they use for other people. v. 19 circle "consider yourself a guide" "consider yourself a light" "consider yourself an instructor" "consider yourself a teacher" -- that's what religious people think. Then how do they treat the rest of the world? Blind, in the dark, foolish, infants. See the difference in attitude?

6. The sixth characteristic of religious persons is they have a condescending attitude toward others.

They think they've got it when nobody else has it. "We're the teachers, we're the guide, we're the way." Everybody else is blind, foolish, in the dark, everybody else is just stupid!

Have you ever known anyone who was a religious snob? "Listen to me, world, I've got the answer for everything." A religious know it all? Wants to show you how much Bible they've got under their belt. This is a characteristic of a religious person.

They use the Bible as a hammer to beat you on the head. They take great pride in correcting you. They've always got a verse to quote; it gives them an ego boost.

The fact is God had given the law to the Jews. But why did God give His word to the Jewish nation? **So they could strut around superior to everybody else?** He gave it to them to be the missionaries of the world.

When it says the Israelites were God's chosen people, it doesn't mean they were special and that God loved them more than anybody else. **But they were special in that they were given the message to take to everybody else.**

That's why they were God's chosen people. The problem was they didn't do it. They sat on it. Rather than giving it away, they became more and more separated and said, this is only for us. That's one of the reasons Jesus Christ came to earth. The Bible says He came to break down the barrier because the message was not getting out. Now God has taken another group to share that message to the world -- the church.

These people have a condescending attitude toward others. These are the know-it-alls who go out and beat up on people and then they complain about being persecuted. Suffering for Jesus? No, they're just being obnoxious! Don't blame it on Jesus. No matter what you're doing if you're going to be obnoxious, people are going to be upset.

If your faith makes you feel superior to others and put them down, then you're devoted to a religion not a relationship. Your faith is not to make you feel superior. I like what Billy Graham says, "**Evangelism is just one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread.**"

I'm not any better than anybody else. When I go to share the gospel it's not because I'm more superior or more perfect -- I'm not! It's like if I had the cure for cancer I'd share it, even if I had cancer myself.

7. Paul asks five very pointed questions in these two verses. He nails them! One of the characteristics of religious people is that **they don't always practice what they preach.**

v. 21 *"You who teach others, do you not teach yourself? And you who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? And you who brag about the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law?"*

Religious people are easy prey They hold up a standard of living then they don't live up to it themselves. for hypocrisy because they have external standards. That makes God upset. Paul asks them these pointed questions: **"Do you practice what you preach?" Circle: "you teach", "you preach", "you say", "you abhor", "you brag".**

What do all of these words have in common? They're all related to what part of your body -- your mouth. These are mouthy people. Religious people are great at mouthing things but not being able to back it up.

Paul is saying, "Your walk does not match your talk. Your conduct does not match your claims. Your behavior does not match your belief. You say one thing but you do something else." Isaiah 29:13 "They honor Me with their lips but their hearts are far from Me."

A lot of religious people just give lip service. On Sunday they say the Rosary, pray a prayer, sing praise songs and do these things with their lips but they walk out and it does not match in their life style.

Ezekiel 33:31-32 This is the basis for what Paul was saying. This is a quote, or correlation. *"My people come to You as they usually do and they set before You to listen to Your words but they do not put them into practice. With their mouths they express devotion but their hearts are greedy for unjust gain. Indeed to them You're nothing more than one who sings love songs with a beautiful voice and plays an instrument well. They hear Your words but they do not put them into practice."*

There are a lot of "religious" people who go to worship and they listen to the sermon and they listen to the special music and the songs and they even sing and they walk out with no intention to apply them to their lives. Paul says that's not going to make it!

Romans 1. Paul has listed the seven characteristics of a religious person. The result of religion in the world is in v. 24 *"As it is written Jesus' name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."*

What an inditement! Paul isn't writing the easiest passage here. He's saying, because of your religion, non religious people are turned off! **Because of your pioussness, unbelievers reject God.**

"Why don't you go to church?" I asked five questions in a personal survey. I discovered an interesting thing. The unchurched people in this valley don't have hang ups with God, they have hang ups with Christians. They don't have hang ups with the Lord, they have hang ups with the church and what they perceive.

They have a problem with believers who act superior, who pretend to be perfect, who brag about their relationship to God, who treat other people in this condescending manner -- all of these characteristics -- who don't practice what they preach.

The biggest problem is not: "Do you believe in God?" Yes. "Do you believe in Jesus?" Yes. "Do you believe in the Bible?" Yes. "How come you're not in church?" -- "I got burned a few years back. I went to a church and something happened..." Paul is bringing this out here. This was the ultimate put down to the Jews.

To the Jews the worse sin a Jew could commit was blasphemy. **Blasphemy is bringing shame on God's name. Paul says because of the way you act, unbelievers are turned off, unbelievers don't want to have anything to do with the church.**

He says You claim to be teachers, instructors, guides for everybody but you're actually turning people away. **How many times have you met someone who's said, "If being a Christian means being like that person, forget it!" Do super pious people turn you off?** You get around them and they make you feel inferior. Like you know nothing.

I think what the Bible is saying is be careful about our attitude toward non-Christians, people who don't know Jesus. There are a lot of obnoxious witnesses. Gahndi had actually studied the claims of Christ and he was very close to becoming a Christian. But when he came to America he was going across the South -- the Bible belt -- and went to a restaurant where they wouldn't let him in because of the color of his skin.

Gahndi wrote later that he rejected Christianity not because of Christ but because of Christians, because of the hypocrisy in their lives.

Two statements to remember:

1. **It's not my duty to make people be religious.** God has never called you to make people be religious. Some people go around like little policemen and every time somebody cusses they stop -- "You shouldn't do that!". It's not your duty to make people religious. It's your duty to share Christ with them.

2. **Never expect an unbeliever to act like a believer until he is one.**

That includes your kids, your husband/wife, your parents, people you work with. The Bible says that you don't have the power to change until you have Christ in your life. When we ask people to go clean up their lives and they don't have the Lord, they don't have the power to do that. Jesus never said, "Go clean up your life. Get rid of all your faults, bad habits and then come to Me." He never said that. He said, "Come to Me with your hang ups, problems, faults, sins, and I will give you the power to make the changes." There are a lot of people who come to our church who are in life styles that I don't approve of. But the Bible says that we're to love people and reject sin. Love the sinner, hate the sin -- that's what the Bible teaches.

I could stand up on Sunday morning and say, "If you're doing [and name particular sins], go get your life cleaned up and then come back." We could put up a sign that says, "No people who take dope need come in to this church." Where do those people need to be more than anywhere else? In church! That's where they need to be. They're not going to find the answers in some bar or anywhere else.

We accept people where they are and then as they make the commitment to Christ, Christ gives them the power to make that change. This is a policy of our church -- of accepting people rather than rejecting them. Because you can't change until you have Christ in your life.

I have discovered that people are not offended by genuine, sincere witnessing. It's not people who really care and share their faith in an honest way that turns people off. **It's the high**

powered phonies and hypocrites -- religious people -- that turn people off. I've shared my faith with a lot of people who I thought would turn me off. I'd share it and ask, "What do you think about that?" They'd say, "I think it's real interesting" and I'm surprised! The fact is people in the world are much more willing to receive the good news than we are willing to share it. They want it and are waiting for it. What they don't want is some religious person to cram a religion down their throat. Don't talk about religion, talk about a relationship. A relationship to Christ.

The point of verse 24 is he's saying religion sends some people to hell. The true message often gets confused in the trappings of religion and people are turned off, so they miss Christ. That's one of the things we try to do on Sunday morning. We try to have a worship service without all the religious trappings. I wonder how many of you would have come to Christ in a traditional church? Or your friends?

One of my real desires as pastor to you and other people in our church is I want to teach people how to be Christians without being religious.

That's one of the deep desires of my heart -- how to be a believer, turned on, loving Christ, Spirit filled, without being a kook. If you're looking for a church that will teach you how to be "pious" you've got the wrong place. I think Jesus was completely spiritual yet perfectly natural. I think if you got around Jesus Christ, you'd feel totally comfortable, at ease. I think He put people at ease. All kinds of people -- prostitutes, lepers, rejects of society -- were at ease around Jesus. And I want to be like Jesus. Irenaeus said, "The glory of God is a human being fully alive." Many times what religion does is stifle the humanity of people. It keeps them from being creative. They get so many rules, regulations, rituals that weren't even in the Bible. Charles Swindoll says, "Religion is a curse, not a cure."

8. They rely on rituals. V 25-29

"Circumcision has value if you observe the law but if you break the law you have become as if you have not been circumcised. If those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirement will they not be regarded as those who were circumcised? And the one who was not circumcised physically yet obeys the law will condemn you who even though you have the written code and circumcision are a lawbreaker. A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. A man is a Jew if he is one inwardly and circumcision is circumcision of the heart by the spirit not the written code. From such a man's praises is not from men but from God."

The eighth characteristic of a religious person is that v. 25-29 Paul really makes some cutting remarks about circumcision! This practice had become a ritual, an end in itself. v. 28-29 key words: circle "outwardly" and "inwardly". He's talking about the difference between an outward practice and an inward attitude. **Originally circumcision was meant to be an expression of faith. It symbolized commitment to God. It was like the wedding ring of Judaism, like baptism is to the Christian.** This wedding ring is a reminder of a vow and it says "I belong to one woman. I am committed to her for life." It represents a vow I made to Jean and to God. **But a ring is only worth as much as the vow behind it. It's worthless if there is no commitment behind it. Without commitment, this ring is worthless and useless.**

Circumcision was the symbol of the Jew's commitment to God. Paul says that the outward symbol means nothing if there is no inward commitment. Abraham began the practice long back in the Old Testament. Every Jewish boy was circumcised as a symbol to God. It became a ritual. Every Jewish man thought if he was circumcised that was his passport to heaven. He could do any thing and still make it to heaven because of that one ritual. It was a form of works, they took pride in it. If you asked a Jewish man "Are you right with God?" he'd say, "Of course, I'm circumcised!"

You can substitute any word you want to for the word circumcision and you get the same idea. You can substitute the word "baptism" "Lord's supper" "I'm a church member" "holy communion" "confirmation".

It doesn't matter the ritual -- all of these things are useless symbols if there's no heart commitment behind it. A religious person tends to rely on rituals that he can point to. Ritual without reality is worthless.

Philippians 3. If anybody was religious, it was Paul. There were probably few men who were more religious than Paul. He gives his testimony about religion in v. 4-5 *"Though I myself have reason for such confidence if anyone else thinks he has reason to put confidence in the flesh I have more. Circumcised on the eighth day of the people of Israel of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews. In regard to the law a Pharisee [the upper crust], as to zeal, persecuting the church, as to legalistic righteousness, faultless..."* Paul kept every law. He was a perfectly religious person. How much confidence did Paul have in his religion. (v. 7) *"... but whatever it was to my profit I now consider loss for the sake of Christ. What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Jesus Christ for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider it all rubbish. I have lost all things that I may gain Christ and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness that comes from God by faith."* Paul says, All of those things that I would have put on my resume to impress people to get into "Who's Who in Religion", I consider that garbage because it isn't worth anything! What is important is my faith in a person, God's Son, Jesus Christ!

v. 28 In the last two verses of chapter 2 of Romans, Paul concludes by asking the question "Who is a real Jew?" and it's going to surprise you. That question is still one of the most debated questions over in the nation of Israel. Some people say it's on the basis of religion -- a true Jew is somebody who has a kosher kitchen and obeys all the Old Testament laws. Yet there are many Jews culturally and by heritage, who are atheists. There are many atheistic Jews. They say Judaism isn't a religion, it's a race. There are those who say it's only by ancestry. But what about those who converted to Judaism? There are Black Jews and Oriental Jews applying for permission to come into Israel to become Israelis. Can you be black and be a Jew? Oriental? They are trying to decide "Who is a Jew?" Is it by race, religion?

God's answer is verse 28. *"A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly [rituals]. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly, by the spirit, not the written code. God says nothing external makes you a Jew, it's not a ritual, race, custom, religion. It's in your heart.* It's what's inside that counts. This is interesting: Knowing Greek makes it interesting studying the Bible. Verse

29 is a pun, a play on words. Circle "a man's praises". The word "praise" is the same word for Jew because the word Judah means praise. The pun is, **Jewishness comes from God not from man.**

Galatians 3:29 Paul again says, Who is a true Jew? *"If you belong to Christ then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise."*

You become an heir of Abraham. If you belong to Christ then you're a Jew, spiritually you become a believer, a Jew, when you put your trust in Jesus the Messiah. That makes you a Jew.

Another way: What makes you a child of God? Who is a Christian? Who is saved? It's not necessarily somebody who has been confirmed, baptized, taken the Lord's supper, joined the church, kept the Ten Commandments. It is faith in Christ.

What is the bottom line of this section? Paul is saying, **We don't need any more religious people. Religion has never saved anybody. No matter what religion it is: Catholic, Protestant, Jew, Hindu, Mormon. Religion has never saved anybody. Paul points out the things the Jews were trusting in. Today we see there the very same things religious people today are trusting in.**