

Romans 2:17-25

Sunday 5/4/2008

Romans is not one of the books aimed at the future. Romans is aimed at right where you and I are at; it is aimed at where we live. I will tell you why that is. In the Book of Romans, as I have told you for a couple of weeks in a row, we are getting into the aspect of obtaining God's righteousness. That is what Paul is really trying to accomplish in this book. He shows how the Gentiles, you and I, are caught up in our unrighteousness. The nation of Israel is caught up in their self-righteousness. He is showing that the only way the Jew and the Gentile can get God's righteousness is to deal with who they really are and the problems they are really struggling with.

It is the same thing for you and for me. You are going to find out in Romans 4, and we will get a little bit farther down here, exactly how you and I as human beings get, or in some cases if you are saved, have gotten God's righteousness. The only way you can get God's righteousness is to understand who you really are and deal with who you really are in your relationship with God. That is why the Book of Romans is such an absolutely telling book as far as dealing in your life and my life. Many times it gets right down where we live. Sometimes a little too close, but it is a great book. It is one of those books that you love and at the same time you hate. Nobody likes to be told what is wrong with us, but many times that is the best thing for us. The Book of Romans does not spare anything, as you will see even today as we get a little bit farther on.

I. Reading of Romans 2:17-25 and Prayer

Today I want to read in Romans 2, and I want to pick it up in verse 17 through 25. Here is what it says:

Romans 2:17-25

Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;

And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

For circumcision verily profiteth, if thou keep the law: but if thou be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision.

Father, we thank and praise You for the Lord Jesus. Father, as we take the passage today and begin to break it down and look at it, help us to glean out of it those things that help us look and understand who we are. Lord, I know that Romans 1 deals with the Gentiles in their unrighteousness, and Romans 2 deals with the Jew in their self-righteousness. But Lord, those are two things that even a child of God can bring into their life. We may be saved and on our way to heaven, Lord, and we may at one point in our life trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our own personal Savior. But Lord, we can allow the unrighteousness of this world to come in and ruin our relationship with Christ.

We may be saved and on our way to heaven. We may not do anything, Lord, that brings the world in as far as all the filth and ungodliness. But we develop an attitude of self-righteousness that we think that we are better and that we live above the standard that others must keep. Help us, Lord, to always look at ourselves and understand that this is what the Book of Romans does so well. It takes our nose and puts it right face to face with who we really are. Many times we do not like that, but help us, Lord, to like it. Help us to be like Job. Help us to come to the place that when Job was in the height of his trial and the height of his tribulation, when everybody on every side was castigating him and making it like it was his fault when it was not, everybody was blaming God for all the terrible things that happened to his life and asked Job for a statement on where he was with God. Job simply said, "I do not care if He kills me, I am still going to trust Him."

Help us, Father. Help us, as the Book of Proverbs says, that we love the honeycomb, the Word of God, even the bitter things become sweet. We will thank You and praise You this morning in Jesus' name. For His sake we ask it. Amen.

II. The Context of Romans: Jews and Gentiles

It becomes obvious as you begin to read through the Book of Romans that what follows here and what is taking place here is Paul is writing not only to saved Gentiles, but he is also writing to Jews who have been saved and become Christians, and they are struggling with some things. You do not have to read very far in the New Testament to find that out. Many times we forget this. Many times we do not understand how all these things work. But many times we forget the fact that during this period of time there were some things that were happening here that the nation of Israel struggled with. They really did not understand totally and completely how everything was working with the church. It brought up a controversy. You find in the Book of Acts that they are struggling back and forth with some issues.

The Jews did not understand this new thing called the church. While they had been raised all of their lives in a concept where they did not understand the new aspect of the church, many of them struggled with the Gentiles coming into the church. All of their lives they had been told that the Gentiles were bad. All of their lives they had been preached to and told that the Gentiles were unclean and they were to have no part of them. Suddenly, now that Christ has come and died on

the cross, Gentiles are suddenly allowed into the church. Many of them struggled back and forth with this.

This is one of the reasons that Paul writes the Book of Romans. The Book of Romans takes the Gentiles who have been saved and it takes the Jews that have been saved and it puts them on the same wavelength as far as where they are at in their relationship and understanding about what God is doing. Once you understand that great concept, it becomes easier for you to kind of reconcile all of this. You want to remember that the Book of Acts is a transitional book. It is a book that helps. It lasts about 30 some years and it is like a buffer to help everybody understand what God is now doing, coming from the Old Testament to the New Testament. The Book of Romans is written around Acts 17, 18, or 19, right in the middle of all of this. So maybe that helps you kind of put it into perspective of what we are talking about here.

I know for me to really understand something, I have to visualize it. I have to see it. Many times what helped me with the Bible is getting the Bible to the place where I could see the concept in my mind before I tried to understand it. So maybe that helps you a little bit better understand the Book of Romans, where it fits. It fits into this period of time where the Jews and the Gentiles are kind of in flux. We are coming from the Old Testament to the New Testament. Everything has changed and everybody is trying to grasp it and understand it. Sometimes they are having a tough time getting it. So you have Peter and Paul working with it, however they need to, and they are just kind of bringing the thing around so that everybody gets on the same page. Not everybody did. You will find in the Book of Galatians, for instance, that there are some people that they simply would not follow it. You also find it in the Book of Acts. People who are bound and determined to stay to what they are going to believe and what they are going to do, no matter who says what. You always have that.

III. The Art of Sarcasm and Radical Truth

It is obvious that Paul is dealing with some of these people groups as we come into this section here. Now today as we start this out, we are going to break this down like we have so far. We are going to see Paul do a very unchristian thing. It is always amusing to me how the day and age that we live in. This is a great lesson. Because what Paul does now in this section that we are going to look at is he reverts to something that we as New Testament Christians live in today, we just cannot get to. We live in a day and age that Christianity is all touchy-feely. Everything has got to be warm. You have got to have a warm, fuzzy feeling. Everything has got to be positive. Everything has got to be something. There can be no negative in it. Everything has to be uplifting and all that.

The word "edifying" is a word that does not always mean uplifting. Edifying can mean rebuke. It can mean that you get edified by being shown what is wrong with you. Now we see Paul reverting to something. I think these are the great places in the Bible to me. I call these places "the day that they lose their Christianity," "the day they lose their love for people." Because Paul now reverts to sarcasm. He becomes very sarcastic in this chapter. Very frankly, most Christians do not understand that sarcasm and using it in a Christian way is an art like preaching. You do not hear it anymore. Because people are so touchy today, you just cannot. You have to sometimes

be very careful with what you say because people are so... they just do not have a good handle on the Word of God.

There is a place in your Bible in Matthew 23 where I call it "the day Jesus got out of fellowship." When you hear Jesus today, He is the sweet little man from Galilee, a little prophet, and He is always going around and doing good. How many times have I heard somebody say, "Jesus would love this and Jesus would love that. Jesus loves all the people. Jesus never says a mean word to anybody," and all that stuff. You have got to look at Matthew 23. Matthew 23 is a place where God's Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, reverts to the art of sarcasm. He takes the scribes and the Pharisees to task and He says some things in there that if the average pastor in the pulpit would say to the congregation today, they would mark him as somebody that has no grace, somebody that has no love for people, somebody that has no care for people.

Of course, there is a time and a place. There is a time and a place in dealing with people where you have got to revert and do some radical things to try to get people to think of where they are at. I call it in Matthew 23, the eight woes that He pronounces on the scribes and the Pharisees. He calls them some things there that, like I said, if the average pastor would get up... Do you know what He said one time? He said one time in Luke 6:39, somebody says, "What do you think about the leaders of Israel?" His remark was, "I think if the blind lead the blind, they both fall in the ditch."

He is sitting down eating one time, one of the Pharisees looked over and he says, "Jesus, you did not wash your hands before you ate." Jesus looked out and said, "You did not wash your heart. Can you pass the salt, please?"

Did you ever go back to 1 Kings 18 and see the day Elijah got out of fellowship with God and lost a sweet spirit of Christ? He is up against the prophets of Baal. He is up against the prophets of Baal. In that particular passage, it is God against Baal and the sun god. It is one prophet of God versus 400 prophets of Baal. Here is the deal: Elijah just says, "Let us find out who is the real God here. Let us find out who is the real God." He says, "I will tell you what, you build an altar, put a sacrifice on it. You do all the things and I will build one. Let us just solve this thing. Whoever's God brings down fire and consumes the sacrifice, that will be the true God." So he said, "You go first."

The prophets of Baal, they are over there, they build them an altar, they get them a sacrifice, they put it on there. The Bible tells you the story. They are running around in a circle. They are doing all the things that they think they should do. When it did not come down, then they got really into it. The Bible says they started to cut themselves. They started to cut themselves and go through all this ritual for fire to come down. Now, Elijah, the man of God, the sweet prince to Israel, Elijah with a sweet spirit of Christ, do you know what he does? He is standing over here making fun of them. What an unchristian thing to do. He is standing over here and saying, "Now, work hard at it." He is standing over there and saying, "Hey, boys, what is the matter? Can't get it to happen? Where is your God at today? Oh, I know, maybe he is on vacation. Maybe he is on a far journey." He just mocks them and makes fun of them all the way through the thing.

Then he has the insult, the insult. Once they cannot get their fire jump-started, do you know what he does? He says, "Now, boys, watch this." He walks over to his sacrifice and he gets a bunch of water because the sacrifice is going to burn and he pours water on it. Then he pours water on it again. Then he pours water on it a third time. Now, he is not only going to do what they could not do, he is going to do it in an impossible way because he just put 300 gallons of water on top of the sacrifice which has to get on fire. They are over there with their big lighters trying to get the thing going and they cannot get anything going. He steps out of the way and the Bible says, fire comes down out of heaven and does not only just consume the sacrifice, it consumes the wood, it consumes the stones, and the Bible says it consumes the very ground. Do you know why? When God consumes something, it is complete.

Oh, the unchristian way Elijah dealt with those poor prophets. Oh, the unchristian way that Jesus in Matthew 23 and in Luke 6. I do not have time this morning to tell you. The Bible says in Proverbs 26:4-5:

Proverbs 26:4-5

Answer not a fool according to his folly, lest thou also be like unto him.

Answer a fool according to his folly, lest he be wise in his own conceit.

In other words, there is a time for sarcasm and there is a time not to be sarcastic. I do not have time this morning to instruct you in the art of sarcasm, but it is an art and it is part of understanding when to and when not to. The Bible makes it very clear, if you would want to study at some point, that you have got to start by looking at who he is sarcastic with. Now, you do not want to go out of here and just say, "Bob said this today, so I am going to go out and give everybody a smart, elegant answer." That is not how it works. Some of you do that anyhow, but that is not how it works. There has to be an understanding that sarcasm and dealing with people is just as important as any aspect, but what is more important is that the Holy Spirit of God leads you to do it.

You realize that there are some times when you, you realize that in dealing with people, and I know I am outside your box right now, I see it on your face. Most of you cannot get where I am going. I understand that. You are part of this nice legacy in world Christianity that just thinks God would never do anything like that. Probably if we really got into it, we would go down to Matthew and those pastors, you probably already cut them out of your Bible because you could not deal with it. But I want to tell you something. You realize there are some people in this world that God never intends you to win to Christ. You realize there are some people that God is going to bring upon your path that God never intended for them to get saved. God never intended for them to get right. They have already seared their conscience. They already have made their choice. All God wants you to do is just burn them.

I know some of you, maybe most of you, cannot get that, but I want to tell you something. If you do not know that, you do not know very much about people. I will give you something else. If you do not know that, I guarantee you, I bet you have not won anybody to Christ or many people to Christ in your life. Because you could not deal with people on a regular basis and not see that

and come into contact with that. There are some people that, bottom line is, they are so caught up in who they are, they are so caught up in what they are, that the only way you can get to them is to show them how ridiculously stupid it is to believe what they believe. In other words, sometimes, an old preacher told me one time, he said, "Sometimes you have got to get them so mad that they will stop and think."

Most of you do not understand that. Let me ask you a question. I will put it in there. If you were in a car wreck, you and your husband, God forbid, or you or your friend was in a bad car wreck, and you got thrown out of the car and the car is on fire, and that car and your friend is pinned under that car, and there is only one way that... and the car is burning and he is going to burn to death, and there is only one way you cannot get it. Nobody is there. You have tried to move the car. You got your big log, tried to pry it. You got the jack out of the back. You did everything but call for an airlift. You cannot move the car. His leg is pinned under that car, and that car is burning, and he is going to die. The only alternative you have is to get out a hacksaw or knife and sever his leg. In other words, you are going to cut off the leg to save his life.

We do not like to think about that. We like to think, "Well, we will just pull him out. We will just push the car over, or we will get some help. We do not have to go." There are times in life when you do not have that option. You have one option: that is to take off his arm, take off his leg, take off this, take off that, and save him and lose the leg. That is a radical way to do it. Would you like to do that? Do you go to bed at night saying, "I hope I get that opportunity tomorrow"? Nobody likes to think about that. It would be one of the hardest things you have to do. But sometimes, here comes the point, to get people to live, you have to do some real radical things.

I do not know what to tell you. I wish every time, every person you dealt with, that it was just as easy as pulling them out of the car, pulling them out of the fire. It does not work that way in real life. Paul understands that. Jesus understood that. Elijah obviously understood that. Most of God's people today have no clue. There are people who can go so far and bury themselves so far they are touched with God or some other religion or some false religion and get hooked up in their self-righteousness and their unrighteousness. The only way you can deal with them is to get them to see how stupid they really are for believing what they believe. I do not know how else to say it. You have got to get them so mad that they think.

One time, a woman years ago, this has been a long time ago, she had a boy that was a Jehovah's Witness. She came to me and she said, "Would you come and talk to my boy? He is a Jehovah's Witness. He has been in it for four or five years. He really, really, really..." She said, "Would you come and talk with him?" She says, "You have had a lot of success dealing with other people in religion. Would you come and talk to him?" I said, "Well, if he would talk to me, I am not going to go kick the door down and say, 'Hey, sit down.' If he would want to talk to me, I will be glad." What Jehovah's Witness does not want to talk to somebody? Have you ever met a Jehovah's Witness that they were not willing to talk with you about being a Jehovah's Witness? I never have. Because he thought I was going to be just like most Baptists. Boy, that was a day in his life. He got a revelation from somebody.

First thing that got him all worked up was when they walked in there, I had a big box of his books, all written by Watchtower. Must have had 40 or 50, in a big cardboard box. I said, "Hey, I am Bob." "Well, I am so-and-so." "Well, come on in." We sat down, and we put those over there. He says, "What are those for?" He thought I was going to give them to him. I thought, "Well, your mother said we were going to talk about Jehovah's Witness. I thought maybe you would want to go through some of these, or we could start someplace else." Do you know what I got him on? He got so mad he threw me out of his house. Literally threw the books out on the porch, broke my cardboard box. Threw me out of his house. We were there for two and a half hours. What happened was, he got so angry at me. He got so mad at me. He got absolutely so livid at me that he literally threw me out of his house, cursed me out, lost Jehovah, and threw me out. Then threw my books out.

Do you know what I said to him? I got him on one point. For one point, he wanted to go everywhere around the world, like they all do. He wanted to talk about hell. He wanted to talk about tribulation. He wanted to talk about this. He wanted to talk about that. I wanted to talk about one thing: "Where were you at, you believed at, before 1888 with Russell von Rutherford?" The Bible says, "Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain that build it." You have no history as Jehovah's Witness before 1800. Show me one. I said, "I will give you a million dollars cash. Got my checkbook in the car. I will give you a million dollars cash. You give me one Jehovah's Witness in 1500, 1600, 1700, 1200, 1800." He snarly looked back and said, "You do not even have a million dollars." I said, "I could get it together for you. You could find the person."

Want a little good advice in life? Somebody taught me, "Do not ever fight with an old man." No, this is good advice. "Do not ever fight with an old man." Do you know why? Because an old man cannot fight. He will just kill you. That is great advice. Somebody goes, "I am going to whip this old man." The old man says, "I cannot fight you. So I will just kill you." Bam! You do not care. One point, one point. We never moved off that point for two and a half hours. At the end of that time, and I ridiculed it. I said, "You mean to tell me that you are going to believe something that you cannot go back before 1800? Name me one Jehovah's Witness." I said, "I will tell you what. I will get, let us play a game. I will give you 10 guys who believe what I believe for every one you give me. Oh, I will tell you what, let us make it better. Let us do 50." I was pulling your lies on him.

I said, "Where is your Jehovah's Witness at in 1700? You are going to tell me that from 1800 to 1990, whatever it was, 80, whatever it was." I said, "That is when the world had the truth. Everybody before that point never had the truth." I said, "Do you know in a world population of 5.6 billion people at that time, in a world population that has run for 6,000 years, do you realize that that is one millionth of 1% of the world's population that only gets eternal life?" I said, "How did somebody in Jesus' time or after Jesus' time, how did somebody in the 3rd century, the 4th century, the 5th century get what you believe? You say that Jesus believed it. You say the apostles believed it, but then you cannot find anybody in history to believe it." Oh, he was livid. His foam was coming out of his mouth. He threw me out of his house.

Do you know what? Two years later, I got a phone call from him. He says, "Bob, this is so-and-so," and I remembered immediately, I said, "Oh, boy, round two coming up." He said, "You know what? I want to apologize to you." He began to cry. He says, "I want you to know I got saved." He said, "I want you to know that that day you left, I was so mad. I was so angry. I hated you. If I had a gun, I would have killed you. A ball bat, I would have hit you over the home plate." He said, "I was absolutely livid. I went back to my Kingdom Hall. They could not answer my question." He said, "I quit my job, went to New York and went to work for Watchtower. They could not answer my question. Nobody could answer the question. God took that thing like a knife in my heart. One day I went someplace and somebody witnessed to me, and I just gave it all up and trusted Christ as my Savior." But you see, I had to cut his leg off to get him out of the car. Can you understand that? That is what Paul is doing here. It is what Jesus does. Sometimes when you understand how to use it and how to deal with it, you have got to understand. The key is knowing in the Bible when it is to be done. That is a great study in itself. We do not have time for that today.

IV. Applying Paul's Sarcasm: Self-Righteousness and Hypocrisy

Now I look at verse 17 and 18. Here comes the sarcasm. I love it.

Romans 2:17-18

Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God,

And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law;

Yes, they do. Yes, they do. Yes, they do. Yes, they are. Do you know what he is saying? Making fun of them. Here is what he is saying: "You are Jews and you have the law. You brag and you boast about you are the one true God. You brag about the fact that you know His will, that all things have got to come through Israel. You brag and hold up the fact and you approve the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law." That means they understand that all the blessings of the earth have got to come through them. He says, "You have the law, you boast about your one God, you know His will, you approve the things that are excellent."

Now he sets them up. Of course, all these things are true as far as the Bible is concerned of what God wants them to be. But the problem is, it is not what they are doing. They have elevated themselves in their self-righteousness. They are now way above reaching anybody. They do not care about reaching anybody. They care about maintaining their spirituality that the world looks at them and they hold out the great sign that they are God's chosen people. He is setting them up, except Israel is not doing what God wants them to do. Do you know what he is trying to get them to do? He is trying to get them to do what I talked to you last week about doing. He is trying to get them to see who they really are. Because before you can ever get God's righteousness, before God is ever going to use you, I am not saying you have got to fix everything in your life just like that. I am not saying that because we know that that does not always work. When I work with

people, and many of you disciple people, you know as well as I do that there is a process in getting a person to really have that relationship with God. But let me tell you something. Understanding who you are has to be immediate before that happens. You have to be honest with yourself. He is trying to get Israel to be honest.

Sometimes in some people, not any of you, but sometimes with some people, you have to really come after them and get them to think of who they are. Now I know that, and I mean this, sometimes I say things with tongue in cheek when I say, "Well, I know that is none of you." And yet I am thinking there is somebody out there. Honestly, I do not see anybody, know anybody in my world, in our church, just like that. I really do not. I really do not. I mean that so I do not want to be tongue in cheek about it. But I am dealing with what Paul is telling them. I am dealing with people and talking about people that you are going to deal with at some point if you stay in the ministry and continue to grow. It is just that simple.

He says in verse 19:

Romans 2:19

And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness,

Now there is where he hitchhikes off of what Jesus said in Luke 6:39. When Jesus said to the scribes and the Pharisees who were leading Israel, and somebody said, "What do you think about this?" He says, "You know what I think? I think if the blind lead the blind, they both fall into the ditch." That is what he is making a reference to here. He is hitchhiking off of something that Jesus said. "A light to them that are in darkness." Yes, right. They should be. They are supposed to be. He says, "An instructor of the foolish." You know that Bible is about a wise man and a foolish man. Israel is supposed to be the wise man. The unsaved Jews are supposed to be the foolish man. It is the job of the wise man to reach out and get the foolish man.

Do you know what is true in our lives? This world is made up of two kinds of people: wise and foolish. Wise are saved for the most part. Foolish are unsaved. Oh, you have some that are saved and still fools. Like I said a couple of weeks ago, just getting saved does not cancel out the fool across your forehead. You have to apply what the Word of God says. But that is our job. That is Israel's job. He says, "A teacher of babes." Do you know what that is like? That is the next generation. We all know when we come through our study on the Book of Deuteronomy. Deuteronomy, second giving of the law. Why he had to put a Deuteronomy, a second giving of the law. It is because the nation of Israel did not give their children the heritage what God had done in their lives. So God had to do it a second time. That is exactly what he is saying. You ought to be a teacher of babes. You ought to take the young generation. Prepare them to be the leaders when you guys die off. That is true of churches. That is true of Christians. That is true of your kids. You ought to be preparing the babies in your family right now to grow up strong and straight before the Lord and do what is honorable and do what is right before God. No question about it.

We had the parenting seminar a while back, where we went through that thing. We had the marriage enrichment, where we went through and how to put that together before you even got to

the children. A teacher of babies. The next generation. It is true of this church. We always have Christians coming in and we have Christians that move up the ladder and as you grow spiritually. Let me tell you something. The next... I am not going to be the pastor forever. I am not going to live forever. If Jesus does not come, somebody has got to take this work. Somebody has got to take over the leadership. Somebody has got to be the ones that carry on the legacy of what this work started.

I will tell you what, what you see through his sarcasm here and what he is trying to get across is the great principle. Now you see it. Romans is where we live. Romans makes us confront who we really are. When the Holy Spirit of God and God sees us playing the games, He just plays the game better than we do. That is all. You want to be sarcastic in your life toward Him? He will be sarcastic back to you. It is a game. But it is a game that God always plays better than we do. We think we get ahead of God. We think that we can get the corner on God. We actually think that we can do something wrong, get away with it and beat God in the end. What a fool we are. I will tell you what, Galatians 6:7 says:

Galatians 6:7

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

It may take two years, five years, 10 years, 12 years, but you are going to reap it sooner or later and it is going to come back. It is going to come back.

He says in verse 20:

Romans 2:20

Which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law.

A form of it. Not the real thing, just a form. We saw this over in 2 Timothy 3:5. When Timothy was talking about the false teachers, the New Testament church, he said:

2 Timothy 3:5

Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away.

He is saying to the Jews, "Oh, you have all the pomp and circumstance, you have all the laws, you have all this, you have all that, you have the outside structure, there is just nothing real on the inside." There are a lot of God's people that way. You meet them all the time, deal with them all the time. My whole life has been built around dealing with good people and people who are empty shelves. We have the little expression, "The lights are on but nobody is home." Somebody else says, "Well, his elevator does not go all the way to the top floor." Somebody else says, "Well, they are not the sharpest light bulb in the box." Those are all clichés that we use, but the bottom line is this: Christianity, God's people come in two shapes and sizes, only two. They are either well furnished or on their way to getting their shelf furnished, or they are empty on the inside. That is the nation of Israel. That is what he is dealing with. This whole thing forms around Israel, having a form of the knowledge of truth without really having it. It translates over

to the church, having a form of godliness, God's people having a form of godliness, but not really having it. No power in their lives.

The Jews today, the Jews today from the liberal reformed, and they are the real radical liberal bunch, right up to the ultra-conservative orthodox, and they are the ones that still wear their beards and little pigtailed and wear the little black hat and cut their hair and cut their beard the way they are supposed to. They only give Him lip service when it comes to God and His law. One of the greatest verses I ever found in the Bible that not only details out, if you want the nation of Israel in one verse, if you want one definitive verse that details out the nation of Israel the way they are today or where they have been since their demise, it is 2 Chronicles 15:3. The problem with it is it is also a great verse for where we are at today. Because it is a telling verse, powerful verse, one of the greatest verses in all of the Bible as far as I am concerned. He says this in 2 Chronicles 15:3, I am going to put it in the context of Israel. You put it in the context of you and me.

2 Chronicles 15:3

Now for a long season Israel hath been without the true God, and without a teaching priest, and without law.

I do not know of any greater verse that tells you and me from God's authority where the nation of Israel is at today. For a long season, they have been without the true God. No teaching priest, nothing that brings them to the reality that is just a form. Most common Jews have never even read the scriptures. I hear people all the time, they talk about, "Well, I work with a person who is Jewish." Let me tell you something, 99.999999% of the Jews that you work with are not Jews in any way, shape, or form. They might as well have gone out and gotten them a T-shirt that said, "I am an aircraft mechanic" or "I am a fighter pilot." They are no more a Jew than they are a fighter pilot or an aircraft mechanic. They just wear the badge that says they are. You have the orthodox Jews that try to be as close to it as they can. But here is the problem. All the scriptures that are read in the synagogue are nothing more but bits and pieces carefully chosen to sidestep the real Israel that Israel has to face. That is all they are. Their sermons have been sanitized and sterilized and the prophecy concerning Christ and His coming.

Do you not know that there are over 500 prophecies in the Old Testament? 500 prophecies that every time a Jew reads his Bible in the Old Testament, he has got to get around some way. In the Hebrew Old Testament, their Bible is not set up like yours. Your last book in your Bible in the Old Testament is Malachi. The last book in a Hebrew Old Testament that a Jew reads is 2 Chronicles. They are not the same order. Do you know the last thing God tells that Jew in 2 Chronicles? The last thing He tells that Jew in 2 Chronicles. Every time a rabbi reads it. Every time a Jew reads it. Every time somebody who claimed to be Jewish reads their Bible through and stops at 2 Chronicles 36. Do you know the last thing he reads? The last thing he reads is he is told to go back to the land. Back to the land.

Rabbis do not read and study the Scriptures. They do not study the law and the prophets. They study the comments of the comments of the comments that somebody has written on the Scriptures of what he thinks it means. Well, that is four authorities from the real authority. Now I

like reading books because I think you can read a lot of books and learn a lot of things about God, the Bible, history. But I tell you what, I have a rule in my mind that I never violate. That is, I never get past one authority past the authority. I do not get caught up in nine or ten guys what they all believe about it. I judge everything I read through the Word of God that God has given because that is the absolute standard. It is easy to get caught up reading books. Most of God's people want to read books. They just do not want to read the Bible. Reading books will not solve your problem. It is reading the Bible that will solve your problem. Once you get the Bible down, then you read the books to help you with what you do not understand in the Bible. It is not vice versa. That is where it is at.

But we do not like to read the Bible. We know from last week in the Book of James, because reading the Bible makes us look at who we really are. I told people all the time, you start reading the Bible, the Bible is the only book in the world. Only book in the world. This is why we do not like it. The Bible is the only book in the world when you open that book and you start reading it, it immediately starts reading you. We do not like it. You can get Rick Ward's book on his great books, or you can get Pete Ruckman's books, or you can get Clarence Larkin's books, and you can read them and read them, and you can read them and you can read them. Oh, what a great time. You can have fun with those books. When you open up that book, it is the only book on planet Earth. When you begin to read it, it begins to read you. We do not like that. But that is Romans. That is Romans. That is Romans.

Of course, that is the problem of the nation of Israel. The real issue with them is this: The Jews, having rejected Christ at the first coming of Christ, they also had to reject His word. But they stayed in business. They stayed in business. There is a telling thing in the Gospels. When Jesus is crucified on the cross. Now let me show you the depth that these people will go, the same depth that you and I will go, to pull off a facade. You are going to find that when Jesus is crucified on the cross, the Bible says that from the sixth to the ninth hour, the sun did not shine. On the cross, the Lord Jesus cries out, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" From the sixth to the ninth hour, the Bible says that when He dies, the earth rents and great earthquakes, and all these things take place. Do you know what else it says that happens? It says that the veil over the temple, the veil over the temple got ripped right down the middle.

I do not know if you know the significance of that or not, but in the Old Testament, when a priest went into the tabernacle to make the sacrifice, he could not go into the Holy of Holies. Only one man, the high priest, on a special day, then he had to wear special garments, special circumstances could go into the Holy of Holies because that is where the presence of God was. If anybody ever even looked on that altar, God killed them just like that. That is why they had this gigantic veil. Some Jewish historians say this veil was 14 inches thick. No light would prevail because inside there was the light of God. You all saw *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. You know how it works. The Bible says that when Christ died on the cross, and He says, "It is finished," and the Bible says He gave up the ghost, and the heavens go black, and the earthquakes, and the lightning fall, the Bible says that that veil gets cut right down the middle. Now you can look on the Holy of Holies, you can see there, you can walk in, you can look at it, and nobody dies.

Now do you not know that told a Jew something? When a guy walks in there for the first time after the crucifixion, he is so righteous about what he did, and he looks in there and he says, "Oh, oh, my God, I just saw, he runs out and somebody says, 'What is the matter?' 'I just saw the Holy of Holies, I did not see the Holy of Holies.'" And somebody said, "You did not see the Holy of Holies, you saw the Holy of Holies, you would be dead." He said, "I am telling you, it is ripped, I saw it." He says, "Well, let us go." And they peek back in, sneak around the side, expecting God to kill them at any moment, pull it back, step in, there is the Holy of Holies. There is the made up Ark that they have had now for a long time. Nobody died. Nobody died. They looked at each other, one said, "What are we going to do?" The guy said, "I do not know, but we better think of something, because if we do not, we are out of a job. If men now know that the Holy of Holies is no good, maybe this man Jesus was the replacement for, maybe he was the Holy of Holies. We have got to do something."

Do you know what they did? They sewed that veil back up. A hundred years later, 70 AD, when Titus came down and destroyed Jerusalem, they were still going behind that veil, playing the game, playing the game that God was still in objects made with hands. That is what they do. That is what we do. So they had to invent a whole system to make you and me think that they are okay. They had to come up with every alibi and excuse, blaming it on the Gentiles, blaming it on everybody else, so they could say to themselves, "I am okay." They had a form of the knowledge. They had a form of godliness, but no power in their life. The Holy of Holies now, you could give donkey rides on it on Sunday afternoon, and nobody would die. Power is gone, but they had to pretend. So they developed a whole and invented a whole system to make you and me and the world think that the Jews still have some power with God to alibi their rejection of the Messiah.

So what do they do? They reinterpret the passage of the Old Testament today that deal with Christ as the Messiah, and the standard teaching comes out when they read, you would read Isaiah 53, Isaiah 50, Isaiah 51, Isaiah 52, Psalm 22, Job 30. They would tell you, they reinterpret those and tell you, "That is not a Messiah, that is our nation Israel, struggling through history to bring the light to the Gentiles." That is what they have done. They have done everything they could to get out from under the conviction and the truth of who they really are, just like we do, just like we do. God's people in the New Testament the same way. The Jews changed the prophecies to get rid of the Christ. God's people changed the book to get rid of the convictions and the teaching of the Word of God. It is the same system, same system, same system.

Now here it comes. Now from this point on, I want to stand up. I am with you. I do not like this either, but here it comes. Here it comes. Boy, this is where it gets sarcastic. You have not seen sarcasm yet. This is sarcasm with a big S.

Romans 2:21

Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself?

Oh, God, I hate that. Hey, Jews. You teach everybody else. You teach yourself what you teach others. Last year I talked about in time wanting to meet the real need. The real need in our society is people with all kinds of issues and problems. I talked about how I like to take three groups of people and teach you how to do the three levels of counseling when you get into

people's world, that we can have a place where we can really take people and really help work them through the things. I thought maybe we would be ready by Christmas, but we are not. We have got an option on the fire now for the institute people. We will see what they do with that.

Someday you may find yourself in dealing with people. I know some of you do it in a limited view now when you disciple somebody. You know as well as I do that anybody who ever started discipling did not stay discipleship. You get into every other issue, and it is good. That is what it is all about. But let me tell you something. Let me tell you lesson number one of what he says in verse 21. You better get this. Because if you are ever going to be good with people, if you are ever going to be effective with people, and this hits us right where we live. I do not appreciate this any more than some of you do or are going to appreciate it. But what am I going to say?

Lesson number one in dealing with people is this:

> You cannot effectively work with people in areas of their lives that you do not have victory in yourself.

You cannot effectively work in somebody's life with their issues that you have not got the victory of it over in yourself. Because what you wind up doing is teaching somebody else what they should do in any given situation, but you simply cannot do it yourself. That is the problem. That is the problem. I do not like it any more than you do. I am going to be honest with you. Dealing with people and counseling with people, if you ever get to that point, I am going to tell you. It is not usually murder. It is not usually incest. It is not usually rape. It is not usually child molestation. It is not usually drug addiction. It is not usually some gigantic sparkly thing out there that is beyond the grasp of mankind's intelligence. Do you know what it is? It is basic relationships with people. It is basic marital issues. It is basic issues on somebody that has been divorced. It is basic issues in people with guilt, people that have been abused by other religions or churches or who have just made a mess out of their life. Sometimes it is people who cannot forgive. They carry guilt around. Sometimes it is people that have been thrown out of the bus by other churches and they just walk around in life like they are in shell shock. Those are the ones that you and I, that is what we have to deal with. Those are the issues. It is not a big deal. Jesus Himself said, "It is the fox that spoils the vine." It is not the big things in this life that mess us up. It is the little things in life.

This is tough, kids. This is tough. Last week we were into James 1. I showed you how in James 1:22 it said we had to be doers of the word and not just hearers, and we talked about that. Then I showed you how in James 1:25 he changed it.

James 1:22

But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves.

James 1:25

But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed.

You cannot do the work until you can do the word. I do not mean know it. I mean understand how to apply it. 90% of the counseling ministry in dealing with people is built around two verses. You have got 10% that have all kinds of extenuating situations, but I am going to tell you right now, 90% of the ministry of dealing with people is simply built around two verses.

Galatians 6:1

Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted.

And you know what the second is?

Romans 15:1

We then that are strong ought to bear the infirmities of the weak, and not to please ourselves.

That is the ministry. I tell Jimmy all the time we have our little conversations. Your life and my life as leaders in this church and ministry. My job is pastor. Your job as a Christian once you figure it all out. Do you know what you are? You are just a cobblestone street for people to walk on to get to Jesus. Sometimes they wear big heavy shoes. That is your job. That is my job. We laugh about it, but that is the truth. That is our job. My job is a cobblestone road on which men trample on to help them get to Jesus. That is your job. That is my job. That was Israel's job. They were the light to the Gentiles. They are the ones that God wanted to bring all the blessings through and bring the light of the glorious God through the Gentiles through them. But they did not do it. They got prideful. They got self-righteous. They got unrighteous. They got caught up in who they thought they were instead of who they really were. They became hearers of the word and not doers of the word. Therefore, they never did become a doer of the work. You cannot work with people in areas that you and I do not have victory in yourself. It becomes a joke. It becomes a sham. It becomes the unreality of the ministry. It becomes just another game that we play.

Then he says this. Oh, I love this. It only gets worse from here.

Romans 2:21-22

Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?

Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery?

That is a great question. Let me tell you something. The scribes and the Pharisees did not die out at the end of the first century. The scribes and the Pharisees are around today, not only with the Jews, but the most dishonest group during this time that he is writing this is the nation of Israel. They have a dishonest and have robbed God of just about everything. They are in an absolute apostate state. They have sold out the Old Testament. They have sold out the priesthood. They have added two now political structures, the Pharisees and the Sadducees, which you will not even find anywhere in the Bible. It is all about what they can get, not what they can give. How unfortunate that the New Testament church has become the same way. How unfortunate today

that churches exist, not for what they can do for you, but what you can do for them. How unfortunate today that men stand in a pulpit and they want everything from you, but they will give you nothing back. They demand you to be there on Sunday. They demand you to be there Sunday night, Wednesday night, and everything they have got. They demand you to do this and to do that. But if you have got an issue in your life and your family and your marriage, they will subcontract you out to somebody else because that is not what they do.

"Well, what do you do?" They are just like the Jews. The scribes and the Pharisees and the Sadducees did not die out in the first century. They moved right into the church age. Here again, you work with people. You teach discipleship, and sometimes you deal with people about their honesty or their integrity. The bottom line is, you say, "Thou shalt not steal." Do you steal? If you are in business this morning, are you honest in your business? Are you 100% legit in what you do? If I would ask somebody that you hire you, and this is why I tell people all the time, "Do not use people in the church for doing anything." But two weeks goes by that somebody does not have a problem with somebody. I am telling you, do you know what I say to them? "Hey, you need to listen a little bit better." Do you think the devil will not get into details of that? I am just telling you. Because you are going to find that not everybody is honest in everything that they do. Their integrity is not up to your standard. Let us face it. The moment you do something or you hire somebody in this church that has some kind of business, you expect... you are not going to tell me you expect them to give you a better deal than to do somebody else. That is your first mistake. You are not expecting to charge you more. I would. I mean, I would charge you more. If I ran a brick plant and you bought bricks for me, or I ran a shoe store and you bought shoes for me, and you come in and you say, "Hey, Bob, I am in your church. I need a pair of shoes. How much are these?" And I say, "Well, for non-church members, they are \$40. For church members, they are \$110."

Let me tell you something. The Bible says, "Thou shalt not steal." Do you steal? Hey, you work for your boss. He pays you a salary. You give him eight hours of work for eight hours of pay. Do you? Do you? Or do you spend half your day talking to somebody about the Bible? They are not paying you to talk about the Bible. They are paying you to do eight hours work. The Bible says, "Thou shalt not steal." Do you teach the man should not steal? Do you steal? See? Honesty, integrity. Do you steal from God? Malachi 3:8 says:

Malachi 3:8

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

You know me, I do not care whether you give a dime or do not. Hey, if this church depends on anybody out here you giving, we are in trouble. We are in trouble. A guy told me one time, he says, "You know what? I learned a lesson a long time ago. There is not one family, not one person, not anybody in any church that that church has to hinge on if you lose that person, that is your whole church." I have seen pastors call their families, call this, do that. "Oh, you cannot let them leave. You cannot let them leave." If you do not like it here and you want to leave, you can go wherever you want to go. You find somebody to teach you better, love you better, you need to

go wherever you have got to go to do that. I understand that because I will never fall into the trap, nor should you ever fall into the trap if you think this whole church rests on one family or one person or one individual. We are all one body. Everybody pulls together as a body. But God says, "Will a man rob God?" Yes, he does. The Jews did. And they do today. But that is just the way it is.

How do you do that? How do you, after all, I mean, I just do not know. I would like to sit down sometime with somebody and I am not... I do not know, I do not think we have anybody even in here, this crowd. I mean, I do not, with all God does for us, I must be doing what they have got to do. I do not know. I do not know. Do not want to know. I am in the impression that everybody, but Romans is where we live. Where we live. Where I live. Robbing God. Robbing your boss. Robbing each other. That is what it is all about. Of course, that is what he says to the Jew. "Thou teachest the man should not steal. Dost thou steal?"

Oh, I love the next one. This one is great. "Thou sayest to a man, thou shalt not commit adultery. Dost thou commit adultery?" I have a great illustration of this. In Bible Christianity, we have a group of people, and I believe they are saved. But they are people like they had back in Paul's time. We call them legalists today. Legalism in the Bible is simply that saved New Testament people take other saved New Testament people, and they put a set of laws and rules you have got to follow. I must say, most of you today, if not all of you today, would fail the first rule going to a legalistic church. You women have slacks on. I heard a man, my wife witnessed to this, preaching to a crowd of probably what, 3,000 people? He got up there, and he was a legalist to the nth extreme. He got up in front of 3,000 people, half of them were women. Good, nice church, good, solid people. He got up there and called every woman in that church that had slacks on a dirty-legged whore. Yes! Am I telling the truth, honey? Because she had slacks on. I do not think she did.

Now, first of all of this, if that was my wife and I was in that thing, me and him would be having a talk afterwards. Now, he was crippled, so we would have to give him some kind of help here. Can I tell you this story? Can I ask your permission before I tell it, because I do not want to offend anybody, but I have got to tell you this story. I have got to tell him this story. Mel, you leaned over to Mel. "Can I tell it?" "Thanks, all right?" Oh, I have, okay. Now, this guy, okay, I am going to. Do not get mad at me. I want to see your hand. How many want to hear the story? That is only half of you, okay. Here is the bottom line. Now, this guy was crippled from birth from polio. All right? Good preacher. But he hated women. In fact, he was married at the time, and he got divorced shortly thereafter. He treated his wife like a dog, did he not, honey? A terrible, just to order around, just the reverse of my relationship and why she orders me around. And so he is up there preaching on crutches.

Now, Mel Sabaka is my father in the Lord. Mel Sabaka is about as rough and crude as they come, right, Steve? No. He will tell you what he is thinking. He does not care. He is the master of the art of sarcasm. But he has a way of making you like it. This guy just offended 1,500 ladies in this church. He did not just say it. He yelled it at the top of his lungs. Then he ranted and raved about how they were hussies and all of this and all that. Because he is a legalist. Legalists think

that your spirituality is based on how you dress. Most of you guys would be validation of the second law. That is, if you go to church, you have to wear a suit and tie.

I preached one time at a youth conference down in southern Missouri, drove 160 miles to get there. When I showed up, it was 120 degrees in this barn that was an aluminum barn with no heat, no air conditioning, had plenty of heat. No air conditioning, no nothing. The pastor told me that I could not preach that night and had to drive back because I had a short-sleeved shirt on. A short-sleeved shirt exposed the arms. At an air church, that was showing flesh. I reasoned with it. I came all this way. I said, "If you are worried about any woman lusting after these, you have no problem." I said, "You have no issue." That is legalism. I am trying to get away from the story so you will forget about it, but I do not know.

So this guy, he is ranting on his lips. Mel Sabaka is sitting here. I am sitting here, and my wife is sitting here. Mel is mad. I can tell he is mad. Mel did not like the guy anyhow. The guy did not like Mel. My wife leans over to me because she is shaken by this. She, because this first, this is all new. She leans over and she says, and now Mel is her spiritual daddy in the Lord. So it is perfectly okay to ask him because he is the seat of wisdom here. She did not ask me because she wanted it from the real old dog. She leans over across me and she says, "Mel, is that really true?" As loud as she could say it, Mel says, "Nah, he is just mad because he ain't got no legs." Oh, man. That is an absolute true story. I will tell you what. We laughed about that. I have laughed about that. Me and Mel laughed about that for years and years. That was probably 25 years ago.

But legalism is a system that puts a set of laws into effect. That your spirituality is based on the clothes that you wear and the place you go. If you are a legalist, movies are out. TV is out. I had situations where they had youth rallies where all the kids brought their radios and all their TV sets and they put them in a big pile and burned them and everybody cheered around in a circle that "we have been killing the devil now." I would much rather just throw them behind the church. I would pick them up on my way home and you could buy them on eBay a little bit later on. It was the legalist that came up with the idea of what we call backmasking. Now, I am not saying backmasking is true or false, but you get these acid music things, by Led Zeppelin and KISS and I do not know who they all are, Willie Nelson, I guess, and all these groups. The thing is, some legalists find out if you play them backwards, the music says, "Kill your mother, kill your mother, kill your mother, kill your mother." Well, I listened to one of them, it sounded like, you can make it sound, "Kill your mother, kill your mother," or you can make it sound, "Go to the bank, go to the bank," or you can make it sound, "Time to go to bed, time to go to bed." I mean, to me it sounded like anything, but they, they have record bashes. I am not saying that all of it is wrong, but they bring in their kids, they have big youth rallies, they bring in all their records, all their, maybe some of your records need to be tracked, I do not know. But they burn them all in there, throw them down there and burn them all up.

Do you know what, I tried it one time, backmasking, I picked the wrong record. I got a country western song, that was my first thing. I played it backwards, the guy got his dog back, he got his truck back, he got his mic back, he got his job back. I do not know. You see, no shorts. I mean, I am not saying you should not dress modestly, do not misunderstand me, we are right in the middle. I am not someone over here, I think you, I think you ought to, there are people that I

have been in churches where if somebody came to the church and they did not have the right clothes on that they thought was a Soviet, they either set them in the back or they told them they could not come into church. Now, I do not know what to do with that. Let me tell you something, you are in any hole here, what is going on in your mind and your heart right now. I just cannot go there. I do not think you can legislate morals. When I preach, I do not preach about the clothes you wear, I preach at your heart. I figure if your heart is right, whatever you have got on your body will be just fine. When you dress ladies in the morning and guys in the morning, when I dress, when you dress to please the Lord, then everything you have got on is going to be just right. So I go after the heart. I go after the heart. But legalism is a system by which they try to put the Old Testament law back into your life and its spirituality based on rule.

Along with this comes the no divorce. If you are in a legalistic church and you have been divorced, you might as well go out and blow your brains out because you are done as far as they are concerned. You never can pastor, you cannot be a deacon, you cannot be a Sunday school teacher, and it really does not matter if you were divorced before you were saved or after you were saved to them, it is all wrong. They teach this, that if you have been divorced and you have gotten remarried, you are now living in open adultery. That is what they teach.

I talked to a guy one time, he was struggling with it, he came over to see me and he says, "I am just having a real tough time." I said, "Well, what is the matter?" He says, "Well, I got divorced and I know I was wrong and my wife was wrong, it is just one of those things." He said, "I am really trying to put my life back together." He says, "I do not know what they told me that as long as I have to stay single the rest of my life, as long as I stay single." He says, "I am 30 years old, I do not want to stay single, but they said I have to stay single the rest of my life. If I get married, then I am going to be living in open adultery the rest of my life and I am going to, and I will never be used in the church. I will never be able to be a deacon, I will never be able to be a pastor, I will never be able to be in a ministry, I will never be a Sunday school teacher, never be this, never be that."

I stopped him at that point and I said, "Okay, let us see what is wrong with this system. This is real easy. Here is the way it works. Okay, you are divorced. If you get remarried, here is what you cannot do. You cannot be a pastor, cannot be a deacon, cannot teach Sunday school, you cannot be in leadership, you, what do you want to be in? You cannot be my assistant. What can we let you do in our church? Oh, I know, we will let you tithe." See how stupid that is? You cannot do anything but we want something from you. That is the way it works.

Here is the verse: "Thou sayest to a man thou shalt not commit adultery. Dost thou commit adultery?" A number of years ago I have a friend of mine who was a pastor and he got a divorce. Now I understand issues with divorce and all that and here is my, I do not have time to get into my stand on it today, but my stand is this. Look, everybody makes mistakes. If you are here this morning, you have been divorced and you are not remarried or you are divorced and you are planning on getting remarried or you are divorced and you are remarried, the bottom line is this: The blood of Jesus Christ, God's Son cleanseth us from all sins. Simple as that. You do what is right with God, you do it. I am going to show you why that is in just a second. I am going to

show you why this thing, the Pharisees did not die out. I am going to show you what he is talking to Jesus about, but I have got to give you my illustration here.

A friend of mine was a pastor. He got divorced. Really, his wife left him. His wife did not want anything to do with the ministry anymore and she just up and left him. This guy stayed single for like 15 years and of course he was a young man and he met a lady and he wanted to get married so he went ahead and got married. The moment he got married, he was branded by the legalistic crowd and now he had no right to pastor because he was a divorced man who got remarried and he was living in open adultery. That was the teaching.

Now, here is how it worked. A buddy of mine, by the name of Jim Lake, up in Mount Peele, Vermont, good friend of mine, had him in to preach. The word got around that this guy was coming to preach for him. Jim got a phone call from the Association of Legalists up there, Mount Peele, Vermont. They all got together there and they came over to have a little church meeting and they sat around there and Jim was very cordial. The head Pharisee said, "Now these are saved, born again men." The head guy said, "I hear you are having so-and-so to preach in your church." Jim said, "Yeah, that is correct. Looking forward to it." He said, "Since when, brother, do you allow adulterers to preach in your church?" Jim looked at him and said, "You have got to understand Jim. Jim is very fast. You have got to be really quick to get ahead of Jim." The old boy ruffled down and he said, "Well, since when, brother," and this is the way I love it, this is what they do. They put their head down, look down at their glasses and he probably said, "So when, brother, when brother, when brother, when brother, when brother sent you loud daughters to preach in your pulpit." Jim says, "All the time." He said, "In fact, you preach in my church many times and you are an adulterer. So am I." The old boy said, "Well, well, I want you to know when do you when well, I have never been divorced and I did not know you were divorced and I have never been in a, I have never been in an adulterer's relationship and I did not know you were." And Jim says, "Well, I have not been and I am not divorced and married for 20 some years. But the Bible says in Matthew 5:28:

Matthew 5:28

But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in her heart.

Your move, pal."

You see, the old boy thought because he never got in the act or he never was divorced that that admitted adultery from his life. Come on, kids. Come on, young man. Come on, sweetheart. Let us get honest. Do you know what the bottom line is? You and I, if we allow it, we take our mind places. We never permit taking our bodies. The old Pharisee, that is Pharisee for you. That is what they do. He thought because he had never been divorced that the fact that that you did not apply to him. Let me tell you something. It is when it comes to sin, it is never the act. It is always the heart that produces the act. Now, I am not saying the act of adultery is not bad. I am not saying there are not some terrible consequences to it. It can ruin your family, it can ruin your ministry, it can ruin your life, and all things the above. But the bottom line, when David got into his mess with Bathsheba, when he got right in Psalm 51, here is what he said:

Psalms 51:4

Against thee, thee only, have I sinned, and done this evil in thy sight: that thou mightest be justified when thou speakest, and be clear when thou judgest.

Sin does not start with the act. Any sin starts in your heart. But the old Pharisee thought that he was oblivious to that because he never committed the act or he never got a divorce. What a sham. What a fallacy. One time, the group of Pharisees, remember them, brought a woman to Jesus? He brought her over there and he threw her down in front of Him and Jesus says, "What is this, guys?" He says, "We caught this woman in adultery in the very act. Kill her!" Old Testament law says, "Kill her!" Jesus says, "I agree, that is kill her. All right, let us kill her." Then do you know what He said? He said, "Okay, boys, you do it. Oh, one thing." He said, "He that is without sin among you, let him first cast a stone at her." Put them right in their place because you know what they were? He knew they were using the law. He knew that they were fair. He knew they were guilty of the exact same things. That is what the Jews are. The Jews go around putting everything on everybody and they are guilty of them themselves. God's people do the same thing. We get ourselves so self-righteous. We get ourselves that we look at everybody else's problems. What the Book of Romans does, it brings you right back to the reality of where we live. Who am I today? Who are you today? This is like we saw last week, the Jews and God's people, Romans 2:15, their thoughts, excusing and accusing each other. I will excuse myself, but I will accuse you. That is where it works. That is the way it works.

Then he says this, verse 22, it only gets worse. It will be fine at this point. We did just, but no, no, verse 22, he has got to add insult to injury.

Romans 2:22

Thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?

You bet we do. Israel did it. We do it. Do you know how we got the name Christian? We got the name Christian because back in the early Roman Empire and the early times after Christ died around the first century, the Romans had hundreds and hundreds of gods. They had a god for everything. But Christianity only had one God. The Romans looked at Christianity as a poor man's religion because they thought the more gods you had, the bigger, better religion you were. I mean, like bigger, better, and the more toys you have, and all that stuff. They thought that a religion with many, many, many gods has to be much better than a religion with one God. Not only that, but these Christians or these believers said that their one true God was living inside them. So then they ridiculed him and said, "Oh, your God, we have big palaces to our gods. We have big buildings with beautiful columns and beautiful this and beautiful granite statues. There is where our gods are. Your God is living inside you. Well, your God is who? Christ? Christ lives inside you? Well, you are just a little Christ." From that came the word Christian. It means little Christ.

But the one true God is pretty low on our priority list today. The scribes and the Pharisees and the legalists, they will get on you for loving a book and worshipping a book. And the God of this book, but they will worship their schools. They will worship their education. They will worship,

do you know what? If you ever get to the place, and I hope this never happens to you, but if you ever get to the place that you go to try out for a church to be a pastor, they are not going to ask you what you know about the Bible. They are not going to ask you if you can lay all this stuff out or ask you what you are going to do. Do you know what they want to know? They want to know where you went to school and how many degrees you got. Because to them, the more secular degrees you have got and the more you have got education, they think the closer that makes you to God. They are just like the Jews. They will never ask you what do you know about the Bible. They will never ask you what about this or what about that or what do you believe about this. They do not care. They just want to know where you have been and who you have hung out with. If it lines up with where they are at, you have got the job. That is simple. Because that is their God.

People worship their homes. People worship their cars. People worship their money. Young men worship their girlfriends. Young girls worship their boyfriends. Some of you go through your whole day. You do not even talk to the Lord Jesus Christ. A while back, this has probably been three or four months ago, I talked about the seven qualities of character that are God's. I talked about how that if you really want to know where you are at with God, if you really want an honest face up, look in the mirror and be honest with yourself, really want to look into yourself and say to yourself, "This is where I am really at." Do you know what you do? You take those seven things and you lay them out and list them out and you get into those things and you explore every one of them in relationship of where you are at being taught. Because you cannot lie to the book. You can lie to me. You can lie to your wife, lie to your husband, lie to your friend, lie to your dog, lie to your cat. You cannot lie to that book because that book was reading you while you are reading it.

I must have had eight or nine of you come to me. A whole bunch of you. "How do you do this?" "Lay it out." I gave you all the perimeter. It has been two, three months ago. I said to every one of them, "Let me know when you are done. Go through it and I want to see what you come up with." Nobody has come back. Nobody has come back. Now, I understand why. I am not mad at you and I do not think anything less of you. I did not do it at all because I know what I would find out. I love my denial just like you do. But I understand why people do not come back. Once you get into that, you cannot hide anymore. You may bruise through one or two of them, but there will always be one or two that is just sticking you and you cannot deal with it, do not want to deal with it, do not want to get around it, you want to talk about it, but you just do not want to blow through and put those things in your life and change what you have got to change. So here we are. I am not faulting you for it. I am just saying, who are we today? Look in the mirror. We say we have no other gods, but we commit sacrilege all the time. We worry about what people think about us more than what God thinks about us. Your God today, my friend, is whatever motivates and controls you.

A while back, this has been a number of years ago, I wanted to find out when I was dealing with a lot of drug addicts and a lot of alcoholics. So what I did was I joined Alcoholics Anonymous, not being an alcoholic. I joined, I forget what the drug one is, not being one of that. I went through the 12th step, went every week and really enjoyed it, learned a lot. But one of the things

I had a problem with is they sat around in a circle all the time and they would say, "My name is so-and-so and I am a recovering addict." "I am so-and-so, I am a recovering addict." So everybody would go around and say, "My name is so-and-so and I am an addict in recovery or I am a recovering addict." When it came to me, before I could think, I was worried about what to say, I did not want to say. So it slipped out and I blew it. I said, "Hi, my name is Bob Alexander and I am an addict that is not in recovery." They all looked at me. They said, "What do you mean you are an addict, not in recovery? What are you doing here?" I said, "Well, I have never taken drugs and I have never drunk alcohol." "What are you doing here?" "Well, I wanted to find out because I do have an addiction and I thought maybe you could help my addiction." "Well, what is your addiction?" I said, "Well, I do not mean, I guess I maybe should explain what I can, but the Bible says in 1 Corinthians 16:15:

1 Corinthians 16:15

I beseech you, brethren, (ye know the house of Stephanas, that it is the firstfruits of Achaia, and that they have addicted themselves to the ministry of the saints,)

My addiction is ministry. So I am not going to recover from that. But I thought by coming down here and learning what you guys talk about, how I may be able to help somebody else get out of this addiction and get the right addiction." I said, "Because then I took over the meeting." I said, "Do you know what? The problem here is not that you have got an addiction. The problem here is you have got the wrong addiction. There is nothing wrong with being addicted. Nothing." I think that I am hearing from here and I do not mean to take this over. He says, "Go ahead, brother. You are doing pretty well." I said, "The thing I do not like you. You are saying that you ought to get out of the addiction. No, no, no. You do not need to get out of addiction. You just need to change addictions. You do not need to quit drinking spirits. You need to get hooked up to the Spirit. You do not need to smoke that. You need to get the holy smoke." I am thinking of all kinds of things coming through my head. I am going through that thing. I said, "The problem is," and a guy asked me a question in the back. You could tell he had been around the block two or three times. He says to me, he says, "Well, brother," he says, "I like what you are saying. But," he says, "how do I get, how do I, how do I change addiction?" I was, you know, caught me off guard. But it is one of those things where, and I tell you this all the time. When God calls you up the bat and he puts you on a plate, you will hit the ball. I did not know what I was going to say. I said, and I am thinking, and I said, "The same way you get drugs." "What does that mean, Lord? Help me out with this one. Will You please?" I said, "How did you get drugs?" I said, "I will tell you how you got drugs. You found a man that was selling drugs, and then you made that man your main line. Every time you needed a fix to get your addiction taken care of, you met that guy and you gave him some money, and he gave you drugs. The same way you got addicted to drugs, you are the same way you get addicted to the ministry. Go find your church, hook up to a man who is selling God, who is giving you the Bible, who is laying out the things of God just like the pushers giving you the drugs. Make that guy your main line, get everything you can from him, and hook up with him and get changed from that addiction to his addiction, and you will get addicted to the ministry instead of addicted to what you are doing." They all applauded. They said, "That is really the truth. That is the way it is supposed to be." My friend, that is the way it is

supposed to be. There is nothing wrong with being addicted. We are just addicted to the wrong things. Your God this morning is whatever controls you. Your God, your idol today is whatever pushes your buttons. Your God today is whatever you think about all day long. Some of you go all day long in your life, bless your heart, and do not even think about God. Some of you call your boyfriend or girlfriend multiple times every day, or you are doing little text messages, and you never say one thing to God all day long. Or maybe you give Him a half-hearted prayer before you eat your cold cheeseburger, or you flop in the bed and you will say goodnight to Him, probably not even there. But that is the problem, you see. Your God, my God this morning, is whatever controls us. It is whatever leads us. It is whatever we shout out to. It is whatever motivates, whatever controls you. Yes, we ought to be addicted to the ministry and the way you get addicted is start mainlining on this book. In every aspect of your life, because this is what needs to control you.

I talked earlier about the art of sarcasm. I was fooling around with you on the thing, but the bottom line is this. You have to be able to know when to use those things. "Answer not a fool according to his folly. Answer a fool according to his folly." Two different things. You have got to be able to know which one to do. You have got to be able to know and read the circumstances of every given situation. Because every one of them is different. You cannot deal with the same people the same way, even when they have the same problem. Because you have got different personalities. Everything in your life you are going to deal with as a child of God depends on the sensitivity you have to their circumstances, to their situation. What somebody else may look at and say, "Oh, I do not like the way he did that," means nothing if God told you that is the way it has to do it. Sometimes you can pull them out of the car. Sometimes you can lift them up and put them on the stretcher. Sometimes you can carry them to the hospital. And sometimes you have got to get out the hacksaw and cut their leg off. The only way you know which the way and how to do it is by the leading of the Holy Spirit of God in your life. The only way you get that leading of the Holy Spirit of God in your life is to get addicted to it. Get to the place just like some of you cannot go a day without a cigarette, go an hour without a cigarette, or go a day without this or a day without that. You cannot go 15 minutes without thinking about it. You cannot go 10 minutes in your life without thinking about a verse. Everybody you see walking down the street, everybody you see, every circumstance, a principle comes in that motivates you back toward that book. You are absolutely sold out to it, addicted to it, and you just cannot get it out of your system. That is what it takes.

V. The Blasphemy of God's Name

Then lastly he says this in verse 23:

Romans 2:23-24

Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?

For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written.

Boy, that is the worst verse in the whole thing today. That is the most damaging verse that God ever put on my lap or your lap. Do you know what that verse says? I will tell you what it says. I

tell you that when you think life is all about you, when you think your circumstances that you are in is all about you, and you are hurt, and you are the victim, and you are this and you are that, it is never about you. It is never about me. It is about the cause of Christ. When you and I do not do what is right, it is God that gets blasphemed. It is God who gets made fun of. It is God who your enemies look at and say, "Ah, it did not work for him, it will not work for me." That is what the Jews did. The Gentiles looked at him and called him Christ killers. Well, the Catholic Church killed him all the way up the Vatican too. They bore their reproach because they had everything that God gave them. They were not God's people, but because they disrespected God, because they violated God, because they dishonored God, the whole world looked at God and laughed.

Do you know what Nathan said to David in 2 Samuel 12:14, and you better get this. David said to Nathan concerning Uriah the Hittite and what David did:

2 Samuel 12:14

Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

He says this, old Nathan puts his bony finger right in his face. David said to Nathan concerning Uriah the Hittite and what David did: "Oh, I have sinned greatly." Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. It is all about us. Yeah, David, it is all about you. Sure you sinned. Sure you did what was wrong. But David, you do not still get it. He says, "Howbeit? Because by this deed, thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme." It is not you or me that gets hurt. It is not about you. It is not about me. What about the cause of Christ? What about His cause when we so flippantly do what we want to do, step outside the boundaries of that book, make up our own rules, make up and then laugh about it. Romans 14:7 says:

Romans 14:7

For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself.

There is always somebody watching your life. You may not know it. You may not even suspect it. I guarantee you, if they know you are a Christian or they even suspect you are a Christian, they are going to watch your life. Everything you and I do, everything that is about us, everything that we do when we put us up as the real victims, when we forget that it is not about what happened to me, it is not about what you are going through, what happened to you. It is about the cause of Jesus Christ maintained through it. It is about people looking at your circumstance and my circumstance. She just does what is right and God, even though it may be a bad circumstance, even though it may be a tragic circumstance, God gets the honor and glory out of it instead of getting blasphemed through it.

The fact is, my friend, it is not about you and me. It is about the cause of Christ getting hurt. We do not do what we are supposed to do, all of us. God's name gets blasphemed. We lose sight of that because it is me. "Oh, I am going through this. I am this, I am that. It is all about me. It is all about my issue. It is all about my problem." No, it is not. If you are a child of God, it is about His. People are watching your life. They are watching to see if you really live what you say you do. They are watching your life and my life all day long. Every situation I have to deal with gets

criticized one way or the other. You have got to walk the line. You have got to make sure that it is right by the book, that you can go back to the book and say, "This is what I did and this is why I did it." It was not for your situation. It was not for my situation. It was for the cause of Christ. Get the glory out of it.

That is the Jews. The Jews have done more damage to themselves because of the arrogant, self-righteous attitude they have taken toward God and His Son. Let me tell you something, ladies and gentlemen, the body of Christ today has done more damage to the cause of Christ because we have fallen into the victim status. We want it all to be about us. Not one time in 35 years of ministry, not one time, not once, not one time, not once, has anybody ever come in and tell me their story, their circumstance, their situation, whatever they are going with, and not one time has everybody said, "I do not care about me, I do not care about that. How do we fix this? That God's name does not get blasphemed through it." Not one time. Not once. Not once. Not once.

VI. Conclusion: Romans Reveals Our True Selves

Romans is the top book. We should have opted for 2 Corinthians because Romans puts it right where you and I live. Romans will not allow us to pretend we have got it all together when we do not. Romans will not permit you and me. It will not permit you and me to flitter out here and pretend that we have got it all together when we do not. Romans exposes the flaws in me. The worst part of it, this is, not you, the worst part is me. You have got to listen to it this morning. I have to listen to it again, but I had to put up with it Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday, and Saturday because that is the days I work on it, fine-tuning it, and getting it all together. He kicked my rear end up 6 days from Sunday, 5 days. He just got it once.

I look at some of those things in there, especially about the gods, the sacrilege, about causing and bringing a blasphemy to Christ and the things that we do. I thought to myself, "Boy, what Romans does, what Romans does, it strips the veneer of who we pretend we really are." We can walk around and say an amen, glory to God, and pretend on this and pretend on that, and know all about the Bible, but the truth of that is, Romans strips it right down to the bare metal, and you have to look and say, "You know what, there are some things in my life that I am not willing to deal with, and until you are willing to deal with them, God is going to get blasphemed through it." I do not know what it is in your world. Maybe you have got it all together. I do not know. I know I had to look at my life from one end to the other this week. I know this. It is not about me. It is not about you. We like to think it is, because we all like to play the victim. We like that soft side that comes along with it. Because being a victim, any time we can absolve ourselves, "Well, how can I be responsible if I am the victim?" Well, I have told you this before. In most situations I have dealt with in life, there are very few victims, truly victims. But I will tell you what, do you know who the real victim is? I will tell you who it is. It is the cause of Christ. What we allow to go on in our lives, and we just flippantly laugh at it or smirk at it or just think nothing about it, when all around us, because no man lives to himself and nobody dies to somebody who is watching your life and my life and judging the cause of Christ by it.

Maybe we ought to vote again. Not too late to start 2 Corinthians. I did not even vote along with you today. But I am telling you, that is the Jews' problem. Though we do not like to think it is our

problem, it is. I am going to tell you something else. God has got some tremendous things for some of you. I look at some of you and watch what God has done with you, and I watch how God has just molded your life and brought you through what He has brought you through, and I see how God has brought you in. I see how God just continues to reach out there and bring people in from the most unbelievable circumstances that you never think, but it has got to be the hand of God. There is no natural human element that could do what sometimes God does. I want to tell you something. God has something for every one of you in this room. Every one of you. Every one of you are unique. Every one of you is special. I do not care what level you are on, and I do not even care what problems you have got. I do not care what problems you have had. I do not care where you have come from. I do not care what you have done. All I care about is where you are at at this point. But I am saying, you can be guaranteed. There are not a lot of things in life you can be sure of, but you can be sure of one thing. God had you here to hear what needed to be said today, and God wants to do something with you.

Now, the real issue has always been this. It is not, "Does God want to do something with you?" The real question is, "Do you want to do something with God?" But it has to be on His terms. I wish it could be on my terms. I wish it could be on everybody's terms. It cannot be. It has to be on His terms. It is the only way it will work. But I am telling you, this is what Romans does. This is why Romans, and I have said it when we started, it is the greatest single book in all of the Bible as far as to the Christian life, the Constitution of Christianity. It gets right down to where you and I live and what you and I have to deal with, and it will not let us look any other way but face to face in the Lord. Every head bowed, every eye closed. Father, we thank You and praise You for...