

“A Form Of Godliness”
Romans 2:17-24

Introduction:

1. Let's Open Up Our Bibles This Morning:
 - To Romans 2:
 - Where - We've Been Learning About:
 - Some Of The Principles:
 - Of God's Judgment!
2. Because - Before The Apostle Paul:
 - Gets To The Good News:
 - In His Letter To The Romans:
 - He Needs To Remind Us:
 - Of The Bad News:
 - That - 3:10 - "There Is None Righteous, No Not One!"
 - And That - Because "There Is **None** Righteous":
 - **Every One**:
 - Will Face God's Judgment:
 - And - Apart From Jesus:
 - Experience God's Wrath!
3. Well - So Far In Chapter 2:
 - We Have Learned About:
 - The Guilt:
 - Of The Gentiles - Which Probably:
 - Includes Most Of Us!
 - But - In The Verses We Come To Today:
 - We Will Learn About:
 - The Guilt Of:
 - Even The Jews:
 - Who Thought They Were **Superior** To Everyone Else!
 - **IE**: Did You Ever Know Someone Who Felt That Way About Themselves? That They Had A "Superiority Complex"? Well - In Many Ways - This Is What We Find In:
 - 2:17-24 - Where Paul Confronts:
 - **Anyone** Who Might Think:
 - That They Don't Deserve God's Wrath Or That They Won't Experience God's Judgment!
 - And So - He Writes:
 - 4. "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!"
 - The Unbelieving Jews Of Paul's Day:
 - Believed That They Were Superior:
 - To Everyone Else!
 - And That - God Himself:
 - **Looked** At Them Differently:
 - And Would **Treat** Them Differently!
 - 5. But - Do You Remember:
 - The Principle Of God's Judgment:
 - That We Looked At Last Week?
 - God & His Judgment Is Impartial!
 - 2:11 - "For there is no respect of persons with God!"
 - And - Even Though God Did Choose:
 - & Blessed The Jews:
 - They Still Did Not Respond In The Right Way:

- To His Grace!
- Instead - They Still Thought They Were:

1. *A Superior People!*

- As We Read In 2:17:
 - “Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God!”
 - Some Translations Have “If” Instead Of “Behold” - But Either Way - Paul Is Trying To Get The Attention Of A Hypothetical Jew!
 - And He Does So, Because He Knows That When The Roman Church Shares The Gospel:
 - In Their Own City & Community, They Will Most Certainly Come Across Jews!
 - And So - The Church Needed To Be Prepared:
 - For The Arguments That They Would Make:
 - Against The Gospel! Especially Since:
 - The Jews Believed They Were A Superior People! Superior:
- Because Of Their Special Calling!
 - Because Of Their Special Name & Heritage:
 - As “Jews!”
 - They Believed That Since They:
 - Had “Abraham As Their Father” - Then They Were On Good Terms With God!
 - And So - They Took Great Pride:
 - In Their Name!
 - But, Really, What Did They Have To Do With That Name?
 - **IE:** Did You Have A Choice When You Were Born Into Your Time? Your Family? Your Country? Of Course Not! And Neither Did They!
 - They Were Given:
 - This Special Calling - By God’s Grace! But:
 - They Also Believed They Were Superior:
 - Because Of Their Special Comfort!
 - That Is - They “Rested In The Law!” (2:17)
 - They Took Great Comfort In The Fact:
 - That God Had Given Them A Special Revelation Of Himself In His Special Law - Through Moses!
 - And So - They Took Great Pride:
 - In The Law! **IE:** Pharisees!
 - But - What Did Paul Already Say About That Law?
 - 2:13 - “For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified!”
 - So - Just Having & Just Hearing The Law:
 - Wasn’t Enough! They Needed To:
 - Heed & Obey The Law!
 - And So - The Law Became:
 - A **False** Comfort To Them!
 - They Were Seeking Rest In Something That God Designed To Cause Un-Rest!
 - But, They Also Felt They Were Superior:
 - Because Of Their Special Claim!
 - 2:17 - Their “Boast Of God!”
 - Now - This Word - “Boast” - Can Be Used:
 - In Both A Good Way & A Wrong Way!
 - In 1 Corinthians 1:31 - We Are Told:
 - “He That Glorifieth / Boasteth, Let Him Glory / Boast In the Lord!”
 - This Is The Good & Right Kind Of Boasting!
 - But Here - The Jews Were Boasting:
 - “Of God” - In A Wrong & Proud Way!
 - Because They **Used** God:
 - To Boast In Themselves!
 - Now - Even Though Paul Didn’t Have:

- A Particular Jew In Mind - When He Was Writing:
 - He Did Want Them & Us To Know The Truth About - *All* Who:
 - As He Put It Later In 2 Timothy 3:5 - Are “Having A Form Of Godliness, But Denying The Power Thereof!”
- So - This Can Apply:
 - To Anyone Who Has A “Spiritual Superiority Complex” - And Yet:
 - Does Not Have Christ!
 - This Can Apply Even To Those Who Have Grown Up In Good Christian Families & Have Attended Good Christian Churches Their Whole Lives!
- You See - Like The Jews:
 - Even Though You May Be Special To The Lord:
 - It Does Not Mean:
 - That You Are Superior To Anyone Else!
 - Instead - God Will Judge You Like He Will Judge Everyone Else:
 - With The Impartial Standard Of His Word & Voice!
- So - The Question Is:
 - What Have *You* Done:
 - With The Voice & The Light & The Blessings God Has Given You?

* But Then - Second - We Also See That The Jews Thought They Had:

2. A Superior Privilege!

- As We Read In 2:18:
 - “And knowest his will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law!”
 - Here - Paul Confirms:
 - Some Of The Great Blessings & Privileges Given To The Jews By God!
 - First - They Had:
 - A Comprehension Of God’s Will!
 - That Is - 2:18 - They “Know His Will!”
 - When God Gave The Law:
 - To The Jewish People - It Was A Great Privilege:
 - To Have - In Written Form - The Will Of God! Noone Else Did!
 - And This Is Still:
 - A Great Privilege:
 - For You As Well Today!
 - You Have Been Given So Much More Light Than Even The Jews!
 - But - What Have You Done:
 - With That Light? With God’s Will?
 - Remember What Jesus Said In Matthew 7:21 - “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that *doeth* the will of my Father which is in heaven!”
 - Another Privilege Of The Jews - They Were Able To Make:
 - A Conclusion From God’s Word!
 - That Is - 2:18 - They “Approvest The Things That Are More Excellent!”
 - To “Approve” Here Means To Be Able To:
 - Use Discernment & Make The Right Decisions:
 - Not Just Between Right & Wrong, But Between What Is Good & What Is Best!
 - There Are Some Things In The Bible:
 - That Are So Clear & Obvious:
 - That Even An Unbeliever Can Know What Pleases & Displeases God!
 - And This Is A Great Privilege!
 - To Be - 2:18 - “Instructed Out Of The Law!”
 - The Jews Learned About God & His Law:
 - Their Whole Lives!
 - In Deuteronomy 6:7 - Moses Told Them - “And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up!”
 - So - They Were Taught God’s Will:
 - At Home! At School! In The Synagogue! At The Temple!

- And - God's Word Was A "Lamp Unto Their Feet & A Light Unto Their Path!"
- But Just Having These Privileges:
 - Were Not Enough!
 - What Did They Do:
 - With What They Were Given?
- Now - Think About All The Privileges:
 - You Have Been Given!
 - To Know God's Will!
 - To Have God's Word!
 - And Yet - What Do You Do With Them?
- Well - In 2:19-20 - We Can See What The Jews:
 - Did With Their Privileges!
 - They Kept Thinking They Had:

3. *A Superior Purpose!*

- 2:19-20 - "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!"
 - Instead Of Responding To God's Will & God's Word:
 - In Humility & Faith - They Responded In Pride:
 - And Saw Themselves As **Superior**:
 - To Everyone Else!
 - How Did The Jews:
 - Look At Others?
 - 2:19 - Everyone Else:
 - Was Blind & In Darkness!
 - 2:20 - Everyone Else:
 - Was Foolish & Babes!
 - To The Jews - Everyone Else:
 - Was Deficient & Impaired!
 - Morally! Spiritually! Mentally! & In Their Maturity!
 - And So - They Set Themselves Up:
 - As Their Superiors!
 - As A Leader & As A Light:
 - In 2:19 - As:
 - "A Guide Of The Blind" & "A Light Of Them Which Are In Darkness!"
 - Now - This **Was** What God:
 - Wanted The Jews To Be:
 - To This World!
 - In Isaiah 42:6-7 - God Told His People - "I the LORD have called thee in righteousness, and will hold thine hand, and will keep thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles; / To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house!"
 - But - It Is Clear That The Jews Themselves:
 - Were Spiritually Blind!
 - And What Did Jesus Say Would Happen "If The Blind Lead The Blind?"
 - "Both Shall Fall Into The Ditch!" (Matthew 15:14)
 - But - They Also Set Themselves Up:
 - As A Teacher & As A Trainer:
 - In 2:20 - As:
 - "An Instructor Of The Foolish" & "A Teacher Of Babes!"
 - This Too Is What God:
 - Wanted The Jews To Be:
 - To This World!
 - After All - They Were The Ones:
 - Who Had What This World Needed!
 - 2:20c - "Which Hast The Form Of Knowledge And Of The Truth In The Law!"
 - **IE**: They Had In Their Own Hands & In Their Own Homes - God's Instruction Manual

For Life Now & Life Eternal!

- So - Even Though The Law Of God:
 - Did Not Have The **Power**:
 - To Make Them Righteous:
- Nor - Was The Law:
 - The **Proof** That:
 - They Were Righteous Before God:
- The Law Did Show Them:
 - The **Path** Of Righteousness!
 - **IE**: But - What Did They Do With God's Instructions? The Same Thing We Often Do With The Instruction Manuals We Get! Went To IKEA A Couple Of Weeks Ago - Got A Few Things To Put Together - And Since They Are So Similar - Easy To Get Cocky & Do It On Your Own! (Better If The Instructions Were Clearer!)
- But - Isn't This What You & I Often Do:
 - With What We've Been Given?
 - We Put God's Instructions Aside:
 - And Try To Do Things On Our Own!
 - And This Is Because - All Too Often We Have What The Jews Had:

4. **A Superior Pride!**

- Which We Find In 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? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?"
 - In These Verses - Using Rhetorical Questions:
 - Paul Points Out Our Pride:
 - And Our Hypocrisy!
 - The General Question And Accusation Was This:
 - 2:21a - "Thou Therefore Which Teachest Another, Teachest Thou Not Thyself?"
 - This Was & Still Is:
 - A Very Common Issue, Isn't It?
 - **IE**: It's Very Easy To Say - As A Professor At School - As A Pastor At Church - As A Parent At Home: "Do As I Say - Not As I Do!"
 - This Is What The Pharisees Did - And Jesus Said In Matthew 23:3 - "All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not!"
 - Now - If You Were Asked This Question:
 - You Would Probably Object:
 - And Try To Defend Yourself!
 - Well - For The Jews - They Had No Defense! Because - Paul Points Out Three Areas Of Pride & Disobedience!
- A Pride In Their Walk!
 - In 2:21b - "Thou That Preachest A Man Should Not Steal, Dost Thou Steal?"
 - Now - It Is Good & Right - To Teach Others:
 - Not To Steal!
 - This Is God's Will - "Thou Shalt Not Steal!"
 - But - Are You Practicing:
 - What You Are Preaching:
 - Paul Asks?
 - This Question Is A Call:
 - For You To Be Humble:
 - And Ask God - Psalm 139:23-24 - "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: / And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting!"
 - What Is In Your Heart This Morning?
 - Humility Or Hypocrisy?
 - We Also Find:
- A Pride In Their Words!
 - In 2:22a - "Thou That Sayest A Man Should Not Commit Adultery, Dost Thou Commit Adultery?"

- Now - Again - It Is Good & Right - To Tell Others:
 - Not To Be Unfaithful To Their Spouse!
 - Not To Commit Adultery!
 - After All - This Too Is God's Will!
 - "Thou Shalt Not Commit Adultery!"
- But - Are You Yourself Doing:
 - What You Are Saying:
 - Paul Asks?
- Because - There Are In The Bible:
 - Different Kinds Of Adultery!
 - Marital Unfaithfulness - And:
 - Spiritual Unfaithfulness! So:
- This Question Is Also A Call:
 - For You To Be Humble:
 - And Ask God - Psalm 51:10 - "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me!"
 - What Is In Your Heart This Morning?
 - Humility Or Hypocrisy?
 - We Also Find:
- A Pride In Their Worship!
 - In 2:22b - "Thou That Abhorrest Idols, Dost Thou Commit Sacrilege?"
 - Now - It Was Good & Right For The Jews:
 - To Abhor & To Detest Idolatry!
 - This Was In Keeping With The First & Second Commandments!
 - The Word "Abhor" Even Refers To Something That Stinks! **IE:** Like A Skunk!
 - This Is How The Jews Felt:
 - During The Time Of Paul & Of Jesus:
 - About Idols & Idolatry!
 - But - Were They Instead, "Committing Sacrilege"? Or Were They "Temple Robbers" - The Literal Translation Of The Word!
 - To Rob A Temple - Was A Capital Offense:
 - Among The Gentiles - But It Was Also:
 - A Crime & A Sin For The Jews!
 - Deuteronomy 7:25 - "The graven images of their gods shall ye burn with fire: thou shalt not desire the silver or gold that is on them, nor take it unto thee, lest thou be snared therein: for it is an abomination to the LORD thy God!"
 - But - I Don't Think This:
 - Was What Paul Had In Mind Here!
 - It Was God's Temple They Were Robbing! And It Was God Himself They Were Stealing From!
 - And What Were They Taking From Him?
 - That Which Belonged To God!
 - His Glory & Honor!
 - In Malachi 1:6 - The Lord Said - "A son honoureth his father, and a servant his master: if then I be a father, where is mine honour? and if I be a master, where is my fear? saith the LORD of hosts unto you, O priests, that despise my name!"
 - But Isn't This Question Also A Call:
 - For *Us* To Be Humble? And:
 - To Ask God - Psalm 26:2 - "Examine *me*, O LORD, and prove *me*; try *my* reins and *my* heart!"
- Because - Before God:
 - To Just Preach & To Say & To Feel These Things:
 - About God & His Law:
 - Is Not Enough!
 - There Needs To Be More!
 - And This Leads Us To The Fact That Both The Jews & Us Have:

5. *A Superior Problem!*

- Which Paul Sums Up For Us In 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!”
 - Though In Many Translations - 2:23 Is Also In The Form Of A Question - It Can Also Be Made As:
 - A Statement & A Conclusion - Which I Feel Is The Best Way To Take It!
 - Because - He Wants Them & Us To Know That Just Because One Thinks They Are:
 - Superior - Because They “Boast” In God’s Law & God’s Word:
 - That Is Still Not Enough To Escape The Judgment Of God!
 - Because - What Do We Do:
 - With The Law & The Word:
 - We Have? So Many Times:
- We Disobey The Lord!
 - How? 2:23 - “Through Breaking The Law!” - **His** Law!
 - Not Just In Breaking It:
 - But - By Adding To It & Going Beyond It!
 - How Often Do We Forget:
 - Not Just The Precepts Of God’s Word:
 - But The Very Purpose Of It!
 - To Humble Us!
 - To Teach Us!
 - And - Ultimately - To Drive Us:
 - To God Through Jesus Christ!
 - But Even More:
- We Dishonor The Lord!
 - 2:23b - “Through Breaking The Law - You Are Dishonoring God!”
 - The One You Claim:
 - To Love & To Serve!
 - Remember - Disobedience Always Dishonors God!
 - But - Even More:
- We Disgrace The Lord!
 - Through Disobedience!
 - Even As God Warned His People About:
 - Back In Isaiah 52:5 - Which Paul Quotes Here In 2:24 - “For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written!”
 - In The Old Testament:
 - God’s Name Was Blasphemed & Held In Reproach:
 - By The Gentiles:
 - Because Their Punishment By God Made The Gentiles Wonder About The Promises / The Power / And Even The Person Of God!
 - But Even Today:
 - God’s Name Is Blasphemed & Held In Reproach:
 - When The World:
 - Does Not See The Truth Of God:
 - In & Through His People!
- So - Whoever Knows God’s Will:
 - And Doesn’t Do God’s Will:
 - Has A Superiority Problem - Just Like The Jews!
 - James 4:17 - “Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin!”
 - When You Disobey The Lord:
 - You Dishonor The Lord:
 - And Even Bring Disgrace To His Name!
 - Because - The World Will Look At You:
 - And Say - “Your God Is No Different Than Our God – Because You Are No Different Than Us!”
 - Can This Be Said Of You Today?
 - Ask Yourself - “What Does The World See In Me?”
 - Not Just **What** - But **Who**?

Conclusion:

1. What Paul Describes For Us In These Verses:
 - Is "A Form Of Godliness!"
 - It May Look Good! It May Look Right!
 - But - In Reality - It "Denies The Power Thereof!"
2. This Was The Jews' Problem!
 - But - This May Even Be **Your** Problem Today!
 - Because Of All The Privileges You've Received:
 - From The Hands Of God:
 - You May Think You Are OK With God & That God Is OK With You!
 - And - All Too Often:
 - That Privilege Turns To Pride:
 - And A Feeling Of Superiority!
3. So - What Is The Solution:
 - For This "Spiritual Superiority Complex!"
 - Instead Of Hypocrisy:
 - Humble Yourself Before The Lord:
 - And Seek - Not Just To:
 - Have God's Will In Your Hands!
 - But To Heed God's Will From Your Heart!
4. And - What Is God's Will?
 - First - In John 6:40 - Jesus Said:
 - "And this is the will of him that sent me, that every one which seeth the Son, and believeth on him, may have everlasting life: and I will raise him up at the last day!"
 - God's Will For You:
 - Is To Believe On The Lord Jesus Christ:
 - As Your Savior - And Recognize That He Alone Is Superior!
 - You Can Have All The Blessings & Privileges:
 - In The World - And Yet:
 - Without Faith In Christ:
 - Still "Lose Your Own Soul!"
 - Are You Trusting In Jesus Today?
 - Have You Turned From Your Own Righteousness:
 - To Save You - And Are Trusting In:
 - The Righteous Life & Death & Resurrection Of Christ Alone?
 - This Is God's Will For You!
 - This Is What He Wants You To Do:
 - With All That You've Been Given!
 - Turn To & Trust In Christ!
 - But Then:
 - Second - As Paul Tells Us In 1 Thessalonians 4:3:
 - "For this is the will of God, even your sanctification!"
 - God's Will For You:
 - Is To Now - Live For Jesus Christ:
 - As Your Lord And Master - And Recognize That He Alone Is Superior!
 - Remember What John The Baptist Said:
 - To His Own Followers - About Jesus:
 - In John 3:30? - "He must increase, but I must decrease!"
 - 5. Don't Just Have A "Form Of Godliness" Any Longer:
 - In Your Life!
 - Don't Deny "The Power Thereof!"
 - Because The Lord Jesus Christ:
 - Is - And Always Has Been:
 - The Power!
 - Keep Christ:
 - As The Superior & Preeminent One:
 - In Your Heart & In Your Life!

* What Have You Done With The Spiritual Privileges & Blessings You've Been Given?

* What & Who Does The World See In You?

* Is Jesus The Superior & Preeminent One In Your Heart & Life?

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