

## **ROMANS: RIGHTEOUSNESS BY FAITH FROM START TO FINISH**

### **IV. The Need For God's Righteousness In Man's Condemnation, Romans 1:18-3:20**

#### **C. God's Condemnation Of Religious Man**

**(Romans 2:17-3:8)**

#### **I. Introduction**

- A. The theme of the epistle to the Romans is that God's righteousness is available to man by faith from start to finish (Romans 1:16-17; Bible Know. Com., N. T., p. 441).
- B. This belief is often not accepted in Christendom: Some claim that one must have faith plus works to be justified, and others say that though we are justified by faith, we cannot righteously live a godly life by faith.
- C. In establishing the fact that all have sinned and are helplessly lost, and after demonstrating the condemnation of pagan man (Romans 1:18-32) and moral man (Romans 2:1-16), Paul showed how the religious man is also condemned in Romans 2:17-3:8. We view this last passage for our insight and application (as follows):

#### **II. God's Condemnation Of Religious Man, Romans 2:17-3:8.**

- A. God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men because they are "suppressing" (*katechonton*, lit. "holding down") the truth in unrighteousness, Romans 1:18; *Ibid.*, p. 442; Ryrie Study Bible, KJV, 1978, ftn. to Romans 1:18. God's wrath is expressed against man's **sin, not against man himself** at this time due to the gracious work of Christ on the cross, cf. 2 Corinthians 5:19.
- B. One might agree that pagan and moral men suppress the truth about God, but that religious people are not condemned by Him. However, Romans 2:17-3:8 reveals how religious men stand condemned before God:
  1. What we can apply to all religious people, the Apostle Paul critiqued his fellow religious Hebrew countrymen of standing condemned before God regardless of their religious heritage, Romans 2:17-3:8:
    - a. Paul's Hebrew countrymen relied on the Mosaic Law, they boasted in Scripture's God, they knew His will and approved of what was spiritually excellent since they were instructed from the Law, and they were sure they were a guide to the spiritually blind and a light to those in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and truth, Romans 2:17-20 ESV.
    - b. However, such religious men only condemned themselves, (i) for though they preached against stealing, they themselves stole, Rom. 2:21; (ii) when they taught others not to commit adultery, they themselves committed adultery, Rom. 2:22a; (iii) when they abhorred idols, they robbed pagan temples that idolaters used for depositing valuables in faith that their pagan gods would protect their valuables, Romans 2:22b ESV; (iv) by boasting in the Mosaic Law, they dishonored God by breaking it, causing pagan Gentiles to slander God's name since the Hebrews stole the Gentiles' valuables from their temples, Romans 2:23-24.
    - c. Paul added that the rite of circumcision that was meant to set the Hebrew people apart from Gentiles was valuable only if they obeyed God's law, but by disobeying it as they did, they nullified the value of their circumcision since they were not circumcised in heart, not being separated from sin within, Rom. 2:25-29.
    - d. Paul then anticipated objections from Hebrews about his claims, so he answered each one, Romans 3:1-8:
      - i. A Hebrew might say that Paul taught there was no advantage to being a Hebrew since he sinned, but Paul retorted that the Hebrews had been entrusted with God's oracles, Romans 3:1-2.
      - ii. A Hebrew might say that Paul taught that the presence of faithless Hebrews in Israel would nullify God's faithfulness, but Paul retorted that God is faithful to His Word, Romans 3:3-4.
      - iii. A Hebrew might say that Paul taught that a Hebrew's sin accentuated God's righteousness so God could not fault him, but Paul retorted that God would then be unfair in judging the world, v. 5-6.
      - iv. A Hebrew might claim that if his lack of truth only enhances God's truthfulness, God would not then be able to judge him to be a sinner, but Paul chose not to answer this charge, condemning it outright as being godless and deserving of God's condemnation, Romans 3:7-8.

***Lesson:* Regardless of his religious heritage, and though teaching others not to commit various sins, religious man commits those same sins in his own unique way, nullifying the value of his devotion to his religion! No religious man can charge God with being unfair to condemn him as a sinner, for a religious man's own sins condemn him!**

***Application:* May we realize that the only difference between pagan men, moral men and religious men are types and degrees of culture and types and degrees of supposed conformity to God's law – not sin! Where a pagan man may worship an idol instead of the Creator, and where a moral man may worship evolution in place of the Creator, religious man may claim to worship the Creator while he worships the worldly idols of money, fame, or lust!**