

Bible Study Romans 2:17-3:8

1. What are the things about a person that might make you think they might be a Christian?

2. **Read Rom 2:17-29.** Who is Paul addressing here?

The Jew who thinks he's right with God because he is a Jew, and this is defined in external things (knowing the Law and being circumcised).

3. What is the main problem with the person addressed here?

*They think they are right with God but they are not. Nothing has changed inside. Their actions should show that they are not what they think they are, ie righteous **externally**.*

4. Why is Paul addressing this "person" in a letter written to a **Christian** church whose very real faith is being reported throughout the empire (1:8)?

Perhaps because of the attacks of the Jewish community on the fledgling church, assuring them that in the gospel they have true righteousness with God (1:16-17). Perhaps also because there might be some within the church who were prone to go back to Judaism as the proper expression of being right with God. And thirdly, because the errors of the Jews in Paul's day might become the errors of the Christians unless they are careful to avoid them – this will be discussed in the next question.

5. What errors of the Jews of Paul's days might be repeated within the Christian church? Can you think of real examples you have come across?

Thinking that external 'badges' are the same as internal and personal transformation, or that knowing the gospel is the same as believing and obeying it. Two famous examples: John & Charles Wesley, both trained and ordained as pastor-teachers, travelled to the 'new world' to evangelise Native Americans, and returned to England – and yet were not converted!

6. **Read Rom 3:1-8.** What did the person addressed in vv17ff have right? What did they have wrong? What can we learn from this?

*They grasped something of the centrality of having God's word – "the Law" – in their identity as God's people. But they kept it as something external. They did not **obey** it, they "did not have faith". How many people own Bibles that they never read? Or can quote and argue from the Bible, yet have no love for God or others in their hearts?*

7. What is the connection between the person addressed in vv3-8 and the person addressed in 2:17-23?

The one in 2:17-23 does not do as they say and does not obey the Law of God. The one in 3:3-8 acknowledges this and now tries to justify themselves using Paul's argument. ie they are making excuses for their disobedience of God's word.

8. In v8 we can see it was possible for a person to disobey God's word, to know they were disobeying God's word, and yet to try to excuse themselves while doing it. Do you think this is something Christians might do? Can you think of any examples? How can we avoid falling into this trap?

We are all capable of this. Paul is undermining all place for confidence in our own righteousness and will sum up his argument in the rest of chapter 3 (next study!). We need to keep letting the gospel reveal how desperately fallen our hearts are, how amazingly powerful the gospel is, and how completely we are saved by Christ's righteousness and not our own.

9. Look back to 2:17. "If you call yourself a **Christian**..." what do you think you should be most known for?

While we want to be known for our love, acts of kindness and other good works, ultimately we should be known as a people of repentance and faith – people who know we are not perfect, not physically righteous (yet) but are forgiven and can show that forgiveness to others, and humility to admit when we have failed God and others.