

Chapter Twenty-two
Studies in the Epistle of Paul to the Romans
The Condemnation of the Religionist for Misplaced Faith
Misplaced Faith in a Religious Lifestyle

“¹⁷ Behold, thou art called a Jew, and retest in the law, and makest thy boast of God, ¹⁸ And knowest *his* will, and approvest the things that are more excellent, being instructed out of the law; ¹⁹ And art confident that thou thyself art a guide of the blind, a light of them which are in darkness, ²⁰ An instructor of the foolish, a teacher of babes, which hast the form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. ²¹ Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal? ²² Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege? ²³ Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God? ²⁴ For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written” (Romans 2:17-24).

The Religionist justifies himself before God based upon the practice of a religious lifestyle. His faith does not rest in God’s grace or gospel truth. His faith rests in the practice of his religion. He is no more saved than the Moralism, or even the unbeliever. The apostate Jew (like all forms of Religionists) advances Moralism one step farther on the rung of the ladder into hell. The Religionist must abandon this misplaced faith in a religious lifestyle and religious rituals before he can truly enter God’s rest.

The Law has absolutely no tolerance of failure. The Law condemns for the least failure. The Law has absolutely no mercy. The Law’s offering of sacrifice never ended and was never satisfied. There is no hope in the Law. There is no rest in the Law or its practices.

“¹ Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left *us* of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it. ² For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard *it*. ³ For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴ For he spake in a certain place of the seventh *day* on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works. ⁵ And in this *place* again, If they shall enter into my rest. ⁶ Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief: ⁷ Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, To day, after so long a time; as it is said, To day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts. ⁸ For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. ⁹ There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. ¹⁰ For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God *did* from his. ¹¹ Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief” (Hebrews 4:1-11).

“¹ For the law having a shadow of good things to come, *and* not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect. ² For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins. ³ But in those *sacrifices there is* a remembrance again *made* of sins every year. ⁴ For *it is* not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins” (Hebrews 10:1-4).

To say that a person rests in the Law is an antithesis in terminology. The words law and rest have nothing in common. They are intrinsically opposed to one another. It is like saying, *I am proud to be humble*. There is absolutely no rest in the Law. To be under the Law is to be constantly working.

Although the Religionist believes in God and is involved in Moralism and a religious lifestyle, he has really put his trust in himself. This is a broad, encompassing heresy within what calls itself *Christianity*. Early Christian Gnosticism taught that within every man was a spark of divinity. Man could cultivate that spark of divinity by piety, self denial, prayer, moralism and religious rituals.

Modern day Gnosticism teaches that there is good in every man. That goodness is brought out through positive thinking, self-love, self-esteem and a barrage of other psychobabble. Man is rotten to the core, totally depraved and spiritually bankrupt. No amount of Moralism or Religionism will improve on what he is. Without a “born again” experience, man will never be more than a whitewashed sepulcher full of dead men’s bones.

The Religionist believes he is justified before God because of both his Moralism and his Religionism. He has put his trust in the traditions of men and their creedal, liturgical religious practices. The apostate Jew (like the apostate Christian) has anchored his soul in the wrong harbor. His faith is misplaced because he has not understood the gospel. It is not true that misplaced faith is better than no faith at all.

“Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Matthew 23:15).

Believing one is justified because of Moralism and a religious lifestyle is damnable thinking manifesting unbelief in the gospel. God directs true believers to use Scripture to correct this damnable thinking. It is important for Christians to understand what the Scriptures teach regarding this matter so that God can use them to correct this false thinking.

Many Christians remain silent to this subject out of fear of offending another person’s beliefs. One day these people will face the greatest offense the world could ever imagine. They will stand before the Great White Throne Judgment of God and face the second death. People must be told the truth. That truth should be brought forward in sensitivity and compassion, but it must be brought forward. Let the only offense be the truth of the gospel. If those you know are trusting in a religious lifestyle and go into hell because you never warned them, their blood will be upon your hands.

“¹⁷ Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel: therefore hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. ¹⁸ When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die; and thou givest him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life; the same wicked *man* shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand” (Ezekiel 3:17-18).

“²⁶ Wherefore I take you to record this day, that I *am* pure from the blood of all *men*. ²⁷ For I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God” (Acts 20:26-27).

Building a life without laying the right theological foundation is an operation in futility.

“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. ²² Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? ²³ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. ²⁴ Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: ²⁵ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. ²⁶ And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: ²⁷ And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it” (Matthew 7:21-27).

Read Matthew 7:24 again; “Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock. . .” Faith must be built upon the right foundation. The “rock” foundation is the Biblical truth of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

The “sand” refers to a faith without an accurate theological foundation of Biblical truth. This refers to the instability of self-righteous Religionism and sacramentalism that locks men away behind the prison bars of false beliefs. The “house” built upon these two elements represents an intended place of rest and security. The “floods” are the judgments of God. The house of faith built upon the sands of Religionism will crumble and fall under God’s judgment. There is no safety or security in this house. “And great was the fall” (v 27) because it does not just fall to the ground, but into the very pit of hell.

God condemns the Religionist because he believes he is justified by his denominationalism.

We are not saved by being “Christians.” We should become Christians because we are saved. The term Christian relates to the practice of our beliefs.

The Jews (as do most professing Christians today) made the practice of their beliefs also the means (or method) of salvation. Romans 2:17-20 might be paraphrased as follows, “You Jews think you have all the answers, but your arrogance is sickening because it doesn’t transform itself into any Biblical reality, it is solely of your flesh.”

Romans 2:21-24 continues to condemn for trust in denominationalism (Religionism by various names). To be a “Baptist” does not refer to a denomination. It refers to a theological position. For people (or doctrinal statements) to state they are “denominationally Baptist” is wrong. Today we have many Baptist groups which are denominationally Baptist, but not theologically Baptists. This is what Romans 2:21-24 is referring to.

The Jew was one denominationally, but not theologically. His practice did not coincide with his professed beliefs. His claim to justification with God was based upon his heritage as a Jew, not upon his faith. Paul speaks to this issue in Romans chapter nine.

“⁶Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they *are* not all Israel, which are of Israel: ⁷Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, *are they* all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. ⁸That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these *are* not the children of God: but the children of the promise are counted for the seed” (Romans 9:6-8).

“Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ” (Galatians 3:16).

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1. What is the basis for the Religionist's self justification? _____

2. Discuss what the Religionist must abandon before he can really find rest. Be specific and detailed. _

3. Read Hebrews 4:1-11. Discuss why the Religionist comes short of entering God's rest and what that rest refers to. _____

4. Read Hebrews 10:1-4. Discuss why there is never any rest in the Law or in religious rituals. _____

5. Discuss why it is an antithesis to say one rests in the Law. _____

6. Why is the Gnostic belief in the *spark of divinity* in every man such a damnable heresy? _____

7. Regarding misplaced faith in Religionism, discuss what it means to *anchor your soul in the wrong harbor*. _____

8. Read Matthew 23:15. Why is it not true that misplaced faith is better than no faith at all? _____

9. What does God intend true believers to use in correcting this damnable thinking of being justified on the basis of Moralism or Religionism? _____
10. Discuss the meaning of the statement, *Let the only offense be the gospel*. _____

11. Read Ezekiel 3:17-18 and Acts 20:26-27. Discuss why fear of offending someone's false beliefs should not be the believer's primary concern. _____

12. Read Matthew 7:21-27. Discuss the meaning behind all of these metaphors, i.e. the "rock," the "sand," the "house" and the "floods." _____

13. Read Romans 9:6-8 and Galatians 3:16. Discuss why believing in justification by denominational affiliation is such a damnable heresy. _____
