

Surprise! Surprise! Surprise!
“When Holy People Find Out They’re Not Holy”
Romans 2:17-29

The recent pedophilia scandal in the Roman Catholic Church has made us all cringe. We have all faced those times when we have been shocked at the immoral conduct of those who profess to be religious, even Christian. The truth is, we are no different than anybody else caught up in gross sin. We have just as wicked hearts, just as powerful temptations, and just as difficult struggles. Our hope cannot rest upon “the law” or “our obedience.” The Jews in Paul’s day felt better than the “pagan” sinners around them. They typify the religious, moral people of our day who put their trust in their religious activity.

I. They thought themselves to be . . .

- (A). **Obedient** . . . *“thou retest in the law and makest thy boast of God”* (v.17).
The NIV says, *“you rely on the law and brag about your relationship with God.”*
- (B). **Righteous** . . . *“they approve things that are excellent”* (v.18).
They like to study the law of God, prayer meetings, and all the religious events.
- (C). **Superior** . . . *“thou art confident that thou thyself art a guide to the blind”* (v.19).
The guide has the answers, knows the way, chastises those who wander, and ridicules anyone who doesn’t follow the path. Those who consider themselves righteous by their obedience also *“instruct the foolish, teach the babes”* (v.20).

II. They heard themselves to be . . .

- (A). **No different than others.** . . . *“you say don’t steal, do you steal?”* (v.21 -23).
Paul continues to elaborate with illustrations of adultery and idolatry. In essence, those who think themselves holy tell others to remain pure and reverence God, but all the while have adulterous hearts and place many things before God, too.
- (B). **Also disapproved of by God** . . . *“the name of God is blasphemed”* (v.24).
You think you follow after God by your obedience to the law, but you do not measure up. Just because you are a Jew, Baptist, or Catholic means nothing.

III. They saw themselves to be . . .

- (A). **Exempt from the condemnation of God** . . . *“circumcision profits little”* (v.25).
These Jews did not like this message. They saw themselves above God’s wrath.
The seed of Abraham according to the flesh, even if they be sinners, unbelieving and disobedient towards God, shall share in the eternal kingdom simply because we are Jews” Trypho to Justin Martyr.
- (B). **An exception among the people of the world** . . . *“the uncircumcision”* (v.26).
In the Jewish mind, circumcision was the sign and seal of God’s favor. The law, and one’s delight in it, became the evidence that you were truly God’s. It would be like Baptists relying on baptism and then obedience for justification.
Paul says a true child of God is one cut in the heart by the Spirit of God --- and as a result, this person is *patient with sinners, humble with others, kind to the broken, and above all, seeks not the praise of men, but rests in God’s praise.*