

“In Name Only”

Romans 2:1 - 29

Dr. Jerry Nelson

Jesus spoke very frightening words when he said, “Not everyone who says to me Lord, Lord will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who **does** the will of my Father who is in heaven.” How many who attend churches are fooling themselves into thinking they are okay with God?

In Romans Paul begins to explain the gospel, “It is the power of God for the salvation for everyone who believes (trusts in Jesus).” But before he writes further of the “good news” he spells out the “bad news” in a lengthy part of his letter from 1:18-3:20. In 1:18-32 he wrote of those who refuse to know God as he truly is, choosing rather to worship their own idea of God or themselves. Therefore the “bad news” is that “the wrath of God is revealed against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.” In chapter 2 he speaks of a different group who is under the same condemnation – those who think they know God but don’t.

Verse two states what most everyone would agree with: God’s judgment ought to fall on those who do the evil things like those described in chapter one. But chapter 2 says that when you agree with that statement you are condemning yourselves because you do the same things. Therefore you will incur the same wrath as those who practice false religions or no religion at all.

There is an old saying, “The proof is in the pudding!” The proof of one’s relationship with God is in how we live. It’s not the cause (which is grace through faith) but it is the proof. When God saves a man or a woman, it changes them. The gospel is the power of God for salvation – saving us from ourselves and separation from God.

“Christian” is not just a name, it is a way of life – following Jesus. And so Paul says you may call yourself one of God’s people but if you continue to think, speak and act the same way as those who aren’t then your “Christianity” is worthless. True Christianity is changing a person from the inside to the outside.

The “bad news” is that not only “pagans” but also many “religious” people are under the wrath of God and need salvation through Christ.

For a more thorough treatment of this text, see pdf of sermon.