

“Religion Can’t Save You” //

Romans 2:1–29 // Romans #5

Who’s Your One? [Four minutes]

- The vision of the Summit is to create a **movement of disciple-making disciples**, here in RDU and around the world.
 - We do that by **reaching** people, **discipling** them, and **sending** them out.
 - This year we are going to help stir that movement by having one goal that encourages all those things.
- As we’ve talked about, our rallying cry for 2019 is, “**Who’s Your One?**”
 - We’re asking every member of the Summit to identify *one* person that they will pray for, invite to church, and share the gospel with.
- Living this type of missional lifestyle won’t happen with some grand ambition or self-will...it’s going to happen by the small decisions you make.
 - You don’t rise to the level of your goals, you fall to the level of your habits. (*Atomic Goals*)
 - Not resolving to lose 20 lbs, but changing something
 - Make them small:
 - “I’ll only work out for 3 mins”
 - Guy who just had the goal to drive to the gym
 - “I only have to get out of bed for 30 secs”
 - Small goals for evangelism
 - Pray daily for a “one”
 - Listen for 3 “not statements”: if you only did that, things would change
 - Eat at same places
 - Take walks in neighborhood

- With this being our rallying cry in 2019 we wanted to have a tangible way to measure our effectiveness as we engage in WY1...To have a rallying cry, we need to have a measurable goal. We need a scoreboard. Well, here it is [drumroll please]
 - **In 2019, as a result of *Who’s Your One?*, we’re praying to see 1,000 professions of faith.**
 - 1k people who are being shared and shown the gospel by *you*, the members of TSC.
- Why even count? Numbers represent people, people represent souls.
 - Spurgeon: *Wouldn’t call someone who never catches fish a great fishermen.*
 - In the same way, we want to be a church who is *celebrating* the number of people professing faith in Jesus. It’s not about us; it’s about them and about Jesus opening their eyes!
 - Can really only “count” POF, baptisms, or new church members
 - We wanted to elevate the former without minimizing the latter
 - We will count people who come to faith in our services, or at Starting Point, or that you just tell us about. If you have a great story, share it with us: email one@summitrdu.com
- How do we get there?
 - As of right now, we already have
 - 31 total hands in services +
 - 9 hands at One night (student ministry) +
 - one name given to one of our pastors
 - = **41 total professions of faith**
 - Other action steps?
 - In the coming weeks we’re going to be telling you about an evangelism training that we will hold churchwide. You’ll hear more about that next week.

Lead Prayer Time

- God would give us 1,000 POF
- We would be intentional
- Jesus would make himself known

Introduction

There's a **book in my library** called *UnChristian* that chronicles the results of this extensive, nationwide study conducted by the Barna group in which they sought to **compare the lives of those who identify as Christian** and those who didn't to see what the actual differences are.

- BTW, **I'm usually skeptical of these things** because I want to know, "Well, who do they count as Christian?" Just those who self-identify? Because we have a lot of people in our country who say, "Well, I'm not Jewish or Muslim or atheist--so I must be Christian." And we wouldn't say those are actual Christians.
 - But in this survey, they **didn't count you as a Christian** unless you could articulate the gospel and affirm your belief in it. So, that's at least a little higher threshold.
 - And **the survey was completely anonymous** so that people would be honest about their lifestyles.
- **Here's what they found:**
 - They found that Christians **cuss less in public** (not so much less in private, just in public or around Nana).
 - They give a little bit **more to the poor**.
 - They are **less likely to recycle** (because, you know, the world is just going to burn up anyway)
 - Christians **give more money** to religious nonprofits.
 - And, Christians on the whole **buy fewer lottery tickets**.
 - So, that's all super encouraging. We're really putting Jesus on display there
- **However, Christians are just as likely...**
 - To visit a pornographic website as those who are not.

- To steal something that wasn't theirs.
- To consult a medium/psychic.
- To physically abuse someone.
- To get drunk.
- Just as likely to do illegal drugs or to take prescription medicines not prescribed to them.
- To be willing to lie to get out of a difficult situation
- To have intentionally done something to get back at someone within the last 30 days
- And, just as likely to have said an unkind thing about someone behind their back in the last 30 days
- **In this study, 84% of non-Christians said they knew at least one believer personally, but only 15%** thought that person's lifestyle was significantly different than their own.
 - **One non-Christian in the survey described his perception of conservative Christians as:** illogical, empire-builders, prone to violence; and people who cannot generally live peacefully with those who don't believe what they believe.
 - Now, **before you get all fired up about** all the mischaracterizations the media puts forward about us to make us look bad (which I totally get--I watch CNN sometime and I don't know where they find these people (I thought it was the rapture... but then I realized that God is angry at all them liberals in Hollywood so he sent a tornado here through Oklahoma to try and teach them a lesson)--so, I get that, but **can't we own, at least based on this survey**, that we are responsible, at least in part, for some of this perception? I mean, these are **self-reported things**.
 - Is **this really what Jesus had in mind** when he died to create a **new race of people**? Thank goodness we don't cuss in public and buy lottery tickets--that's really putting Jesus on display, ain't it?

Paul's point in Romans 2 is that religion is often just a thin veneer papered over a heart that is still every bit as sinful as everyone else's, and that religion by itself is powerless to change our hearts.

It **might change our behavior**, but external conformity to religion can't change our hearts.

Remember, **in Romans 1**, Paul lays out his case for why all people need the gospel. He **has painted a graphic picture** of the corruption of the human race.

- And **now, as he opens chapter 2**, he anticipates an objection from his religious, Jewish readers. (Paul has taught the gospel to religious Jews now for 20 years so he knows what objections will pop up.)
- They are all like, *"Yeah, you tell 'em Paul. Those Gentiles are some messed-up people All that idolatry and sexual disorder and societal chaos and stuff."*

2 Therefore, every one of you who judges is without excuse. For when you judge another, you condemn yourself, since you, the judge, do the same things.

- **"Look within, religious person**, your heart is the same."
 - And, btw, every time it says "Jew" in this chapter, you could sub-out, "church-going Christian"--because Paul's focus is on religious people--it's just that most of his audience happens to be religious Jews)
 - (Listen, **when people tell me they are enjoying Romans**, "Oh, Pastor, I just love this new series on Romans; it's so encouraging") I know they haven't really been paying attention yet. **Romans is not encouraging**. At least, not yet. You don't get to all the encouraging stuff until chapter 8.
 - This is a **full-out assault** on you.
 - It's **not "A-men,"** it's "oh my."
- "Look within, religious person," he says, "is your heart really any better?"

⁶ And "He will repay each one according to his works:" ⁷ eternal life to those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor, and immortality; ⁸ but wrath and anger to those who are self-seeking and disobey the truth while obeying unrighteousness. ⁹ There will be affliction and distress for every human being who does evil, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek; ¹⁰ but glory, honor, and peace for

everyone who does what is good, first to the Jew, and also to the Greek. ¹¹ For there is no favoritism with God.

- **Now, at first when you read this, and you says, "WAIT--has Paul changed his mind about the gospel? "He will repay each one according to his works?"**
 - *Didn't Paul just get done explaining that **salvation is NOT earned through good works** but given as a gift through faith alone?*
 - *Didn't he say the gospel is "the power of God to **everyone who believes,**" "from **faith TO faith?"***
 - **And now he is saying, vs. 6**, that God will repay each of us according to our works?"
- **Great question.** Verse 6 is a **quote from Psalm 62** in which the **Psalmist is complaining** about a group of **religious people** who **honor God with their mouths** while their feet are **quick to run after violence**. They give an external show of religion, but internally they are **still filled with wickedness**.
 - Paul's point is that **external practices of religion do not equal** inward transformation.
 - And, **on that final day of judgment, God** will judge the motives of the heart.
 - When it's all said and done, God is going to look at the inward works of the heart--beyond outward performance of religion to inward motivations.
 - And **some works that look good on the surface** are not really going to look that good when you really get down into the motives for **why they were done**.
 - **Classic story:** Neck warmer?
 - So, **just because a work looks good** doesn't mean *it is good*.
 - *And God is never going to judge someone simply by their **external actions--he sees down to the heart.***
 - And Paul, as a zealous Pharisee, understood this as much as anyone--because he'll tell us later in Romans that he realized that often--when his **outward behavior** was conforming to the law--he knew his inner heart was full of

corruption, pulling the opposite way, or **pride, thinking he was better** than others.

- **Now, you say, “Am I going to be judged by my works--are the motivations of my heart going to determine whether I get into heaven?”**
- **PAY VERY CLOSE ATTENTION:**
 - *In one sense, no. For by grace you have been saved through faith... The gospel is the power of God to everyone who believes... He that believes on the Son has everlasting life...*
 - But in other sense, yes. Because your life is the best illustration of what you believe.
 - Faith is not just words. Faith is a heart change.
 - Repentance is not walking an aisle or raising a hand, it is a heart change.
 - Conversion is not joining a church or getting baptized, it is the Holy Spirit coming to take up residence in our heart and making it new.
 - And that means that **when we have truly been saved**, good works always follow conversion.
 - Paul teaches that **we are saved by faith alone, but the faith that saves is never alone.** (it's always accompanied by good works)
 - Or I love how Jerry Bridges says it: **“Holiness is not a condition FOR salvation, but it is always part OF salvation.”**
 - **Illus. Another classic story I've told over the years:** Mary and the house.
 - **Does your life show the effects of Jesus coming to live there?**
 - In a sense, **God could put us on trial in heaven** and say, *“Has this person's life demonstrated the effects of true conversion?”*
 - **Their mouth said they believed Jesus was Lord** and that they were a new creation--but did **their lives show** that?
 - And so, in that sense, **you will be judged by your works** because your works show the reality (or **non-reality**) of what you believe. **There are two things that declare** what

you believe: your mouth and your heart. If they disagree, God takes the testimony of your life every single time!

- **SO, MILLION DOLLAR QUESTION: So what does your life declare about your belief in, and surrender to, Jesus?**

In vs. 7, Paul gives **2 indicators** of a heart truly right with God: **7 eternal life to those who by persistence in doing good** (this means that doing good—living in a godly way—has become a persistent life pattern for you) **seek glory, honor, and immortality;** (that means you seek “glory, honor, and immortality” from the Creator and not from created things or yourself--because we all seek g, h, and i somewhere, right? The question is where you seek them from--what do you **pursue most?**)

And, in vs. 8, Paul flips it and gives **2 indicators** of a heart not right with God: **8 but** (he gives) **wrath and anger to those who are self-seeking** (that means those who put their own self-will ahead of God, and who seek their own glory instead of God's, even if they do it in religious garb--do their religious zeal out of pride or self-interest) and **disobey the truth while obeying unrighteousness** (in their heart they refuse to be corrected--they are stubborn. They don't like to be rebuked or submit to anybody).¹

If these things characterize the attitude of your heart you are not right with God, no matter how religious you are.

You see, ¹³ **...The hearers of the law are not righteous before God, but the doers of the law will be justified.** Again, he makes the point, it's not not having the law, or knowing the things of God, that matter. It is whether you obey the law from the heart.

- **Today, he might say:** So, you have the right creed. You have the right convictions. You know a bunch of Bible verses. You go to church every weekend--you've been baptized, confirmed, walked the aisle, prayed the prayer, filled out the card; you know all the verses to all the praise songs--but what's going on in your heart?

¹ Tim Keller, *Romans for You*, 46–49

- It's not having the law that makes you right with God, it is *doing the law*, from the heart, that makes you right with God.

Now, vs. 14: he makes the point from another angle. He says, "Just having the law doesn't save you--I'll prove it. You Jews are not the only ones with a law."

¹⁴ So, when Gentiles, who do not by nature have the law, do what the law demands, they are a law to themselves even though they do not have the law. ¹⁵ They show that the work of the law is written on their hearts. Their consciences confirm this.

- **We talked about this a couple of weeks ago.** The Gentiles have a law too that God stamped on their consciences.
- Paul says, "The Gentiles **have the law written on their hearts and they are plenty religious, too.**
- It's not **having the law that would make you right with God**; it is **doing that law from the heart.**
- So stop turning to your religion as a source of confidence before God.

Again, listen--his point is not that you can save yourself by keeping the law.

- He's saying that underneath the heart of the religious person is the same corrupt heart that exists in the Gentiles--just a religified version of it--and having the law, or obeying it externally, isn't enough
- The only thing that would please God is to obey his laws fully, with pure motives, from the heart.
- See what he says next? ¹⁶ ...on the day when God judges what people have kept secret, according to my gospel through Christ Jesus.
 - **One day, God is going to expose the hearts of both Jews and Gentiles both**--and we'll see through all the religious observance down to what their hearts are really like.
 - And that's not going to be a good day for anybody--not Jew or Gentile. Because the fallen heart is **deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.**

- **On that day, when our hearts are revealed,** neither Jew nor Gentile will have a leg to stand on.
- **Here's how the 16th-century Reformer John Calvin summarizes these verses:** "*We can prove from this passage that no one is justified by works; for if they alone are justified by the law who fulfill the law, it follows that no one is justified; for no one can be found who can boast of having fulfilled the law.*"²

Let's do a little exercise to make this more tangible. (Some of you love taking those **little quizzes in magazines** that tell you what you are really like. I've got another one for you.)

The **10 Commandments are probably the best example** of the law of God.

- The **10 Commandments comprise** the basic moral fabric of God's universe--
- These are the same laws stamped on people's hearts: **even people who have never heard of the Bible** instinctively recognize many of these things to be right and wrong. (For example, in just about every human civilization people think it is wrong to lie, steal, murder, or commit adultery with somebody else's spouse.
- So **these are the laws we typically recognize** as right. How well do we do at keeping them from the heart?
- Take out your notebook and write out two categories:

Yes
No

I'll **read a few of the commandments**, and give you a short explanation of it, and if you feel like you pretty consistently keep it, check yes. If not, check no. (I'm only going to do 8 of them. The only reason I am skipping 2 is that they might take too long to unpack what they really mean--**I'll tell you what:** If you go 8/8 with this quiz, come talk to me after and we'll see if you can ace the last two. Deal?)

² John Calvin, *Commentary on Romans*

DO YOU KEEP THE TEN COMMANDMENTS?³

1. You shall have no other gods before me: (Can you say--) I have never put anything before God in my life. I have never loved or trusted or obeyed anything more than God. God has always been pre-eminent in my thoughts, affections, and actions. Worshipping him has always been my greatest passion. YES ___ NO ___

3. You shall not take my name in vain: I have always held the name of God in highest respect, invoking it only with thoughtfulness and reverence. I have never been lethargic or apathetic during worship. I have never desecrated God's name by calling myself his follower yet not representing him well. The way I talk, act, spend money, and drive give honor to the God whose name I attach to my life. YES ___ NO ___

5. Honor your parents: I have always respected and obeyed the authorities in my life, and given them honor and willing obedience whether they were watching or not. This includes my parents, my teachers, traffic cops, and the IRS. YES ___ NO ___

6. You shall not kill: I have never murdered anyone (what Jesus did with this commandment in the Sermon on the Mount), nor have I had hateful thoughts nor have taken the slightest pleasure in seeing harm done to another human being. I have never wished harm on anyone, even when they really angered me. YES ___ NO ___

7. You shall not commit adultery: I have never had sex with someone outside the bonds of marriage nor have I ever entertained sexual thoughts about someone I'm not married to. YES ___ NO ___

8. You shall not steal: I have never taken anything that doesn't belong to me. This includes downloading illegal music, cheating in school, or fudging on my taxes. I have always respected the belongings, rights and creations of others and been completely truthful and fair taking only what I've earned. I have never taken

extra Chick-Fil-A sauce to stock my shelves at home. I have never wasted my company's time surfing the web, Tweeting or Facebooking. I've never taken credit that didn't belong to me nor have I ever let others assume good things about me that weren't true. YES ___ NO ___

9. You shall not lie: I've never bent the truth to get out of a bad situation. I've never stretched the truth to make myself look better. I have never slandered another person. I have always told the truth in every situation regarding every person I have ever known, and I've always fully fulfilled any promises I've made. YES ___ NO ___

10. You shall not covet: I have never been greedy for something that wasn't mine, nor have I been jealous of the abilities, looks, position or possessions of others. I have rejoiced with others in what they have, glad that they have it even when I don't. I have never complained about what God has provided for me and always been thankful and fully content with what I have and where I am in life, willing to share what I have with others who have less than me. YES ___ NO ___

***OK, let's all trade with our neighbors to see how we did**

¹⁷ Now if you call yourself a Jew, and rely on the law, and boast in God, ¹⁸ and know his will... being instructed from the law, ¹⁹ and if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light to those in darkness... You who preach, "You must not steal"—do you steal? ²² You who say, "You must not commit adultery"—do you commit adultery? You who detest idols, do you rob their temples?

Paul says, "When you look down into your heart motives, you do the very things you tell others not to do."

- **You say, "Don't steal,"** but you steal. You say, "Don't commit adultery" but you sexually fantasize about people whom you are not married to.
- This term *robbing temples* is probably figurative. He doesn't mean these *religious people* by night dress up as vigilantes and break into churches and plunder the treasuries.

³ Adapted from Will Metzger, Tell the Truth, Appendix A.IV.

- He is **doing with this Commandment** what Jesus did with adultery in the **Sermon on the Mount** (that we saw above). He extends the command beyond outward obedience down to inward motives of the heart.
- **You say not to worship idols**, but *you know that idol-worshipping is more than the physical act of bowing down to a statue.*
- **Idolatry is desiring something more than God.** The reason pagans bow down to idols is because they think this idol will give them prosperity. As a religious person, you may not bow down to the gold statue, but you worship prosperity just like they do. **You crave money and respect and power just as much as they do.** You prioritize those things over God.
- You **even use God** to get them. We can see that by how much you worry about money, seek money, refuse to be generous with your money and how much you complain to God when he doesn't give it to you. **You worship the idol** just like they do, just in religious clothes.⁴
- And in that sense you are "robbing temples." You are using religion to get things FROM God instead of getting more OF God.
- **I heard a guy at our church admit this once**, "You know, for many years in my Christian life I tried real hard to keep the laws. But it wasn't until recently, here at TSC, that I realized I was doing those things so that God would give me the easy life. And now that life has gotten hard, I've seen my gut-level response—which has been to get mad at God for not keeping his end of the bargain, reveals that for many years I've not been seeking God for God, but for the things I think he'll give me if I'm a good Christian--**money, ease of life, a good family**--and that is **proven by how much I complain** when he doesn't do it the way I want it."
- You **rob temples**--you **use religion** to get something from God more than God.
- **Religion is an idol** to get from God something you want more than God.

²³ You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? (Yes, you do) ²⁴ For, as it is written: "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."

- **All the Gentiles and unchurched people can see that under this thin veneer of religion** you have the same corrupt heart as everyone else.
- And, **if anything, your religion** has just made you worse.

I told **you in the first week of this series** that Paul, in some ways, thinks religious people are the worst.

- **Tim Keller summarizes** Paul's attitude toward religiosity this way: **Religiosity, Paul says, makes people...**
 - **Smug**. You just walk around with this subtle but nauseating air about you, "**I'm OK; my family is together. I don't have the problems** you people have because I'm better."
 - Let me ask: **When you hear about your friend's kid acting up in school**, is your gut response, "My kid would never do that so I must be doing something right?" or is it, "**Dang, parenting is impossible**" and "**my kid's got problems, too and thank God for his grace** because if not all our kids would be doomed"?
 - Or **when you find out that another famous pastor** has fallen into sin, what's your first response?
 - Is it, "Well, I **didn't like that church's style anyway** and this just proves my superiority"? Or, "**This just proves that all famous** Christians are hypocrites,"
 - Or is your reaction the question the disciples had at **the Last Supper**, "Is it I? Could I fall prey to that, too?" "God, keep me from myself--my heart is wicked, too!"
 - **Overly-sensitive** (Because **your identity is built on your righteousness**, people can't ever undermine it or question it--if they do it is deeply bothersome or devastating).
 - **Judgmental** (You **need to find other worse** so you can feel good about yourself--so you are really critical of others, always finding fault--you are the kind of person that can point out something wrong with everyone);

⁴ Cf, Keller, *Romans for You*, 57

- And when you **see some fault or weakness in others**, you are not really **compassionate**. Keller: *"You will be at best cold, and at worst outright condemning, toward those who are struggling. Rather than speaking words of encouragement to the struggler, helping to lift them up, you speak words of gossip about them to others, to show yourself in a comparatively good light. A sign of this condition is that people don't want to share their problems with you, and you are very defensive if others point out your problems to you."*⁵
- **Hypocritical**: Vs. 21: We have a more **theoretical-only stance toward God's Word**. Religious people love concepts of truth but are never changed by them. *"A real Christian finds the Bible 'living and active' ; when they hear it or read it, they are convicted, comforted, thrilled, disturbed, melted, slammed down, or lifted up."*⁶
- **lastly, Anxious** (You are always worried--Have I done enough to be really good? Do others consider me a good person? Does God?)⁷

The result--we're smug, overly-sensitive, judgmental, hypocritical and anxious.

You say, "This sounds like Christians on Facebook." Yeah, but in saying that you are being equally **smug and judgmental**.

The result is irreligious people blaspheme God because of us. They don't really see a difference in us and they **dislike the God** we claim to represent.

- **Remember the perspective I shared at the beginning** of the guy who said his perception of **conservative Christians** was that they were *illogical, empire-builders, prone to violence; people who cannot generally live peacefully* with those who don't believe what they believe.

⁵ Keller, 58.

⁶ Keller, 57.

⁷ Adapted from Keller, 59.

- That's **not a totally inaccurate perception**. Religion produces that in us.

²⁵ Circumcision benefits you if you observe the law, but if you are a lawbreaker, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

- **Circumcision was...** outward sign of the Jewish covenant.
 - In those days **before modern standards of cleanliness**, not being circumcised led to a lot of disease. So, circumcision was removing a source of filthiness at the very point of of new life.
 - And that's **all I've got to say about that**. Ask CP.
 - It was **an important sign of what God wanted to do in their hearts**--to remove filth and corruption at our source of life.
- In our day, we could **replace circumcision here with "baptism."**
 - Baptism is an outward picture of the inward covenant. Your body gets washed with water, **picturing the cleansing of your heart**. It's like you are being buried and brought back to life, a symbol of what is happening inside you--you are coming into spiritual life.
 - **So you got baptized**--your body was dipped in water--but does your heart show signs of being cleansed?
 - **You take communion**, but are you showing the inward effects of transforming grace? Does your life show evidence of Jesus living on the inside?
- Again, if we put you on trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence from your private conversations and inward thoughts to convict you?
 - Hey listen: If your **best friend** couldn't stand up here provide compelling evidence from the things you do away from the church crowd that prove you are born again, you probably aren't.
 - If your **mom** couldn't stand up here and explain to us how she knows you are born again by observing your behavior at home, it's **probably because you haven't been**.

²⁸ For a person is not a Jew (or a Christian) **who is one outwardly, and true circumcision is not something visible in the flesh**. (nor is baptism something that only happens on the outside or communion about

getting some juice and a cracker in you). ²⁹ ...circumcision is of the heart—by the Spirit, not the letter.

Paul is saying: **Beware religious inoculation.**

- This is one of **most important concepts for those of you who have grown up in church!**
 - **Inoculation:** give you a dead version of the disease so if you are exposed to the real thing you won't catch it.
- **To quote Keller** once more: *"It is possible to trust in Christianity, rather than Christ. And this can happen in conservative, evangelical churches. Paul is showing us a condition called 'dead orthodoxy', where the basic doctrines of the Bible are accurately subscribed to, but do not make any internal difference. There is an intellectual grasp of the gospel, but no internal revolution."*⁸

Paul's point: Religion can't change you. Only the gospel can. And that gospel has to be embraced DEEP in your heart.

- **Dr. Christian Bernard:** After his second transplant surgery, the patient wanted to see his old heart. So the doctor took him over to a cupboard and pulled out a jar with his old heart in it. He was the first guy in the history of the world to hold his old heart. According to the story the man said, "So this is what was giving me so much trouble?" He handed it back to the doctor, turned away and left it forever.
- **That's what Paul is encouraging us to do.** To realize we need a new heart and embrace the gospel deep in our soul so that God gives us a new heart.

So, that's the question: Have you embraced the gospel in your heart? Not, "Have you been baptized?" or "Have you joined the church?" or even "Have you prayed this prayer?"

- But, "Has the gospel traveled that 18" between your head and your heart?"
 - I've heard **that many church people will miss heaven by 18"**.
- JAG:

MUSIC

So, let's end with Paul's admonition to the religious, because **it is good news. To the religious**, you who have grown up in church, Paul says, **2:4 Or do you despise the riches of his kindness, restraint, and patience, not recognizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?**

- **God's word to you this weekend is not condemnation.** It's mercy. Kindness. The Father gave his Son for you so that you could be brought in!

I've heard it said that **Romans 1 and 2 basically retells the story of the prodigal son.** A man has two sons.

- One rebels against the father, rejects him outright, and runs away. Romans 1 is about him. The **younger son who flees** into the far country. He eats with **pigs**, is miserable and defiled. And the **Father is willing and eager** to receive that wandering son with open arms.
- And when he does, and **takes him into the house** and begins to pour out love and riches on his son...
- The older son gets angry. *How could you receive him when he has shamed you so?*
- And so the **Father leaves the party to go out and look** for his older son. This is the **detail people overlook: the older son** is also outside the house, just like the younger son.
 - He may not have gone as far as the younger son, but he also is separated from fellowship with the Father.
- The **good news:** The **Father stands ready to receive him**, too--if he'll **only come in!** Only if he'll **admit his need of grace and embrace** the Father's mercy.
- That's where he **stands with you**.
- God **welcomes both religious and irreligious sinners** back into his family--but they have to come the **same way: Through the cross**.
 - The only way for religious or irreligious to be saved is to **admit our need of grace and our need of a new heart** and receive that by forsaking both our sin (the younger son) and our false

⁸ Keller, 60.

sense of goodness (the older son) and cast ourselves on the mercy of the Father and believing that he can **forgive** all our sins, immediately, and give us a **new heart**.

- The **gospel** is...

Raised hands

Keller Gospel/Religion chart?