Romans 2:17–29 "Why we need to preach the gospel to ourselves"

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[0:00] Hi, my name is George Sinclair. I'm the lead pastor of Church of the Messiah.

! It is wonderful that you would like to check out some of the sermons done by Church of the Messiah, either by myself or some of the others. Listen, just a couple of things. First of all, would you pray for us that we will open God's Word well to His glory and for the good of people like yourself?
The second thing is, if you aren't connected to a church and if you are a Christian, we really, I would really like to encourage you to find a good local church where they believe the Bible, they preach the gospel, and if you have some trouble finding that, send us an email. We will do what we can to help connect you with a good local church wherever you are. And if you're a non-Christian, checking us out, we're really, really, really glad you're doing that. Don't hesitate to send us questions. It helps me actually to know, as I'm preaching, how to deal with the types of things that you're really struggling with. So God bless.
Let's bow our heads in prayer. Father, we give you thanks and praise that you know everything there is to know about each one of us, that you know each of us personally.
Father, you know us from the moment we were conceived in our mother's womb. You even know our future. You know the dreams that we do not remember when we wake in the morning. You know every mask and front and posture which we go to from moment to moment throughout the day. You see us as we truly are in all of our depths and all of our superficialities. And still you love us. And still Jesus came and died on the cross to be our savior. We ask, Father, that your Holy Spirit would bring the wonderful truths of your word deep into our hearts this morning, that we might learn, Father, to preach the gospel to ourselves day by day. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Please be seated.
[2:14] A very common human problem is that, and maybe it's, I don't know, I'm not going to say it affects everybody who's here. Maybe it affects most of us to some extent, but for some people it's a quite deep problem. And that is this. We fear, we believe, and we fear that if somebody got to know me better, they would like me less. If people got to know me better, they would like me less. In fact, for many of us, we have the functional, whether we're conscious of it or not, we function on the level that if people actually got to know us, they really wouldn't like us at all. They would hate us. And it's a very, very hard thing for us to deal with, that type of situation. And it's funny. It might very well be that the shy person has this as a problem, and they use their shyness to sort of hide so people don't even get to know them very well. But actually, just as well, the very extroverted person can have the same problem. The exceptionally confident person can have the same problem. And they use their extroversion and their confidence and their confidence to keep everybody at arm's length, never wanting anybody to get past this arm and start to come to see that person as they really are.

The text that Daniel read, which is what we're going to be looking at in a moment, it starts off in a very unpromising way. But it actually has some, the best and most beautiful wisdom ever written is found, is opened up in this text about dealing with this very common and very disconcerting and painful human condition. So it would be very helpful to me if you would get in yourself, if you open your Bible, and we're going to look at the Bible text together.
It's Romans chapter 2, verses 17 to the end of chapter 2. Romans 2, 17 to the end. It will be up on the screen if you don't have a Bible, but it's really good if you have your Bible yourself and to look and hear what it has to say. And it begins in a very, very unpromising way. In fact, probably some of you who have good memories for listening say, George, this is going to be a very interesting stretch, how you could get that introduction and connect it to this text. And it begins in a very

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unhelpful way for many of us. It begins like this. By the way, when I say it begins in an unhelpful way, one of the best ways to grow when you're reading your Bible is to be honest about what you think and feel. I mean, God already knows that you think this is lame. It's better if you acknowledge that you think it's lame, because then God can do more when you're acknowledging it. But that's a whole other separate topic. So it begins like this. But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God, and for a lot of us, all of a sudden we check out. I don't know how many, I mean, I think there's, I know there's some Jewish people in the room right now, but for the rest of us, it would be like me getting an email that says, for chartered professional accountants who want to know how to manage staff over 20 and doing taxes, we have a workshop for you. Delete, right? I'm not a chartered professional accountant. I don't have a staff of 20. That's completely and utterly irrelevant to me.

And so when a text like this begins by, for if you, but if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God, we just check out. I'm not Jewish. I don't seem to do any of these things. [5:44] Well, believe it or not, this is actually, well, so here's what's going on before we get any further. At different times in the book of Romans, and it might mention it or might not later on, a lot of times the arguments go from lesser to greater. It's sort of a little bit like if this is a problem for George, then imagine what is a problem for somebody who's way better and more competent, right? If this is a problem for a child, imagine like, you know, if peer pressure is a problem for 12 year olds, wait until you become a 45 year old civil servant. And then you're really going to understand what peer pressure is, or you know, whatever the situation is from the lesser to the greater. And, but here there's an argument from the greater to the lesser. And this is the counterintuitive first thing you not need to understand. There's an argument from the greater to the lesser. So when it says, but if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast, here's what's going to be addressed and why it's addressing the human condition or a certain segment of the human condition and not just everybody. From the Bible's, I mean, and not just Jewish people.

From the Bible's point of view, the Jewish people up until the coming of Christ, who is Jewish, of course, and is going to be introducing like the spirit of the law and tightening things up and, and dealing with the sacrificial system and a whole pile of other things. Up until the coming of Jesus, the Jewish people were the one, the ones who had a special relationship with God. Only they, out of all of the people on the planet, had a special relationship with God. And out of all of the systems of right and wrong and all of the, all of the, of the rules around ceremonies and rituals, only they had a perfect one that came from God. Only them.

Not the Romans, not the Greeks, not the Chinese, not those in India. God, not, not because, you know, the Old Testament that is the Bible, God says, it's not because you're the greatest and the smartest and most holy people. I chose you to show my greatness. It's an early version of how God uses the weak and the foolish to shame the wise. But the Jewish people were chosen to be his special possession, a special relationship with God. And they were chosen and they, out of all of the people on the earth, were given the perfect ones that actually came from God about how to live and how to worship him and how to order your civic and common life. And so what Paul is going to be doing is going to be saying, if the Jewish people with all of these privileges can't have these problems and can't live out of it, how much more will everybody else? But I'm jumping ahead. See what I mean when I look at, and you'll start to see why it applies to other people as well. Look at verse 17 again.

But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God and know his will and approve what is excellent because you are instructed from the law, and here the law means what we would call the Old Testament, and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth. And we're going to pause there.

Now here, Paul is not putting them down. These are good things. These are, in fact, many of the things that God has told them that they were to do. That God gave them the law and gave them this covenant so that the whole world would look and see how great and glorious God is and want to know him. And so he's not putting them down. But if you listen to this and remember that what he's going to be showing in a moment is the problem that is revealed, in a sense using the Jewish people as a test case, well here, if you could put up the first point, Claire, that would be helpful. [9:34] It is good to want to know and teach what is beautiful and good. That's a good thing. And this text shouldn't be read as trying to undermine that. It is a good, it is good to want to know and

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teach what is beautiful and good.

And so we are filled in Canada with people who are very moralistic. In fact, part of our problem right now is warring moralistic groups and multiple war, but we have people who follow religions or spiritualities and are very, very moral. And they themselves, in fact, a way to insult a Canadian, many Canadians would be to say to them, I don't think you're fit to teach other people how to live a good life. Whoa! You want to have somebody hate you for years to come?
Just say that to them. Why? Because most of our self identities are around being good people, being moral people. And we might not be spiritual or religious like those other people, but we have our own way of doing those types of things. And there's obviously some people who delight in doing wrong.
But it is a common thing to want to know and what that's good and think that you have a right, almost an obligation. Maybe not a specific platform like I have, but in the Starbucks amongst the baristas, you understand yourself as actually being a good and moral person that you should give instruction to other people around your office or in your neighborhood, or because of a particular religious or spiritual group that you talk to.
You see, what Paul is going to be doing is the way that Paul's letter is structured, right? There's a summary, and then he's going to sell the problem, and then he's going to show how the gospel solves the problem, and then he's going to show how you live in light of the gospel solving the problem. And the problem here before us is why do good people need the gospel?
[11:30] Why do moralistic and religious and spiritual people need the gospel? Why do they need the gospel? But if you're here and you haven't, you're outside the Christian faith or if you're watching this and you're outside the Christian faith, I want to share a secret with you. A lot of Christians are too intimidated by your togetherness and your goodness to think they could ever tell you about Jesus.

It's a very common Christian problem. I can't tell that person. I can't tell my boss. I can't tell that person about Jesus. Look at them. I mean, they're together in their money. They live a really good life. Everything about them is just really, really good. How on earth could I ever say something to them? It's a very common Christian problem. But this section is going to go through why is it that good religious together people actually need the gospel just as much as people that the rest of us think are very, very bad. And here then is where it's going to be an argument from the greater to the lesser. Because there are many groups that even though they might not say they're instructed from the law, they just take that out, but it describes them. You know, they've been instructed by, you know, by Oprah Winfrey. They've been instructed by Trump. They've been instructed by, you know, take, take, pick your guru, by Muhammad, by Krishna. They've been instructed. They, they have a body of teachings. They're good people. They're moral people. They're moralistic.
They're religious and spiritual in their own way. And they think they have an obligation to teach other people. So why on earth does somebody like that need the gospel? Well, the first and most basic problem is revealed in verse 21. And Paul's going to sort of identify two groups of reasons why those of us who are moralistic and religious and spiritual need the gospel just as much as people who are very clearly bad people. And look at verse 21. The first part of 21 summarizes the whole problem. Verse 21, you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself? Ah, there's the problem. Now he's going to unpack it.
If you could put up the second point, Claire, that would be very helpful. It's a human problem. It's not a Jewish problem. It's a problem for Jewish people who are devout and for the Anglican Church of Canada and for those who are parts of Brethren Churches or a church like ours or a cell of Wiccans or just very moralistic baristas. The human problem, you don't have a good track record in doing what you teach.
You don't have a good track record in doing what you teach. Now just to be clear in this, when I say you, it's to try to make it more punchy, but I mean me too. It's a human problem. That's why I say it's a human problem. It's not a problem just for a particular religious or ethical group. We don't have a good track record in doing what we preach. And Paul's going to sort of unpack this in two different ways. And the first one will just continue. Look at verse 21 again. You then who teach others, because many of us might think that's not the case, but you then who teach others, do not, do you not teach yourself? While you preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who have poor idols, do you rob temples?

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[15:06] You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law. For as it is written, the name of God is blasphemed among the pagans because of you. And there Paul is just quoting, that's Isaiah 52, and he's quoting a whole pile of Old Testament texts that if you're really interested in you can go and Google them and you can see it's a constant theme, especially of the prophets, but also of Moses.

And so here's the thing, and it might be that in a room like this not many of us steal. Although, you know, I don't know if God checked over your income tax return, he would agree with every deduction that you made. And I don't know if he looked at how you manage attendance at work and productivity if he would agree that you actually don't steal time from your employee, your employer. I mean, if God was doing it with a really tight thing and you couldn't sort of gaslight him and charm him and distract him. But the second one, this is where Jesus really comes in. And Jesus tightening it up. And the Bible says that if a man or a woman looks at another human being and lusts after them in their heart, if they imagine, you know, they imagine sexually knowing them or they flirt with them or whatever, that they have committed adultery. And I don't know how many of us would actually be able to pass that test. I'm sure some of us could. Although once again, as to whether in the whole course of our life and God was using his standards, we'd pass it, we might be a little bit red-faced, more than a little bit red-faced, even the most holy of us. But the perplexing thing at the end is actually the real killer. That's the real thing which punctures everything. If you go back to verse 22 again, it says, you who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? Now this is an odd phrase, you who abhor, that's really hate idols, do you rob temples? And there's lots of debate in the scholarly literature about what he's meaning. But I think the simple way to understand this particular text is to read it within its context. And in chapter one, which is just before that, Paul has identified that a common, that the most common feature of the human condition is that we're idol worshipers, that we create idols that we worship. And so this, what this is saying is, it's saying, let's say, to the brethren elder, it's saying to the adoc priests like myself, you say that you're completely and utterly opposed to idols, and you're very good at following the rules externally. But in your heart, are you following those rules externally because you have idols in your heart? Very good example for a minister. Very common problem for ministers is they have to do a sermon, and they read the text, and what they're really looking for is how to be clever, how to be funny, how to move your heart. And they don't read it at all about whether it speaks to them. Pray for every pastor, pray for me, that I die to any temptation or tendency that I might have to only read the Bible text so that I can come up with clever things to say to you so that you think I'm clever. And pray that I'm not serving in type of idol by telling you that so that you'll think I'm even more clever. And even more holy than I really am. Because you see, the fact of the matter is, is that we can be very good at following external rules. But inwardly, we have, you see, an idol in the ancient world was just a visible sign of a functional heart issue, whereby you gave yourself to something or someone, seeing it as ultimate or as very important or as more important than other things that you needed to honor, and you needed to serve, and you needed that to have meaning, you needed that to have success, you needed that to have peace, and there's an actual need to do that.
[19:09] And the idols have not changed. The names have changed. But they're centered around sexuality. And they're centered around power. And they're centered around money. And they're centered around politics. And they're centered around group identity. And they're centered around racial and ethnic and linguistic identity and differences. And though, and it's centered around self. And those things haven't changed. The names you put on them change. It's centered around fertility. It's centered around children. It's centered around having a legacy. You could go on and on and on. And so you could be apparently a very, very good person doing all of the things for the right reason, but really what's motivating you is something else, and it's an idol. I say I hate those idols, but I really like this one because I really want other people to think well of me, and I want to have power, and I want to be seen as the center. And what's really motivating me to do those external things is these inner idols. And that's why if God was to reveal your life as one day it will be revealed, people will see, oh, George didn't do that sermon because he loved the congregation, but because he wanted the congregation to love him.

Boy, that changes how you hear it, doesn't it? And on and on and on. You flatter your boss, you flatter your co-workers because you have an idol of promotions. Go on and on. And so you see, the problem is it is good to want to know and teach what is beautiful and good. The human problem is, for moralistic people, is that we don't have a good track record in doing what we teach. We're very

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good at seeing, we're very good at flattering ourselves too much to detect or hate our own sin. You know, I got in, this is a few years ago, in a coffee shop that I used to be a regular at, and I got to know a lot of the people very well, actually, and it's very interesting how many of them thought that they were the most moral person and disliked the other people all on the same thing. So the person they disliked, if you talked to them, they were the only one who actually really was concerned for staff and really concerned about doing a good job and really concerned about speaking the truth. And they'd take to another one, and they'd say, that person over there, Sarah, they're terrible at all those things. And you talk to Sarah, and they'd say, well, you know, over there, Bob, Sarah would say, I'm the only one who's doing all of these things.
That's the problem with Bob. He doesn't do all those things. And that's how moralistic people look at each other. They're very good at flattering, we are very good at flattering ourselves too much to detect or hate our own sin, and we are very good at finding specks in other people's eyes and not seeing the log in our own eyes, and not even being aware of the fact that we walk around with idols as our glasses.
And that's how we see the world, and that's what motivates us. We don't have a track record in doing what we teach. But the second problem, Paul goes, is also in there, and that is seen if you look at verses 25 to 27, and it loops up to something that he said at the beginning. We'll read it first, because he seems to take an odd track here, verse 25 to 27.
So what this is basically saying is that for the Jewish people, the sign that you become a Jew is if the male in your family grouping has been circumcised.
[22:49] The Old Testament taught the circumcision of males. It would completely and utterly be opposed to female circumcision. Female circumcision is a horrific thing to hurt women and make them not even second-class citizens, but tenth-class citizens. It's a horrific thing. The Bible has never taught it.

The Old Testament would have completely condemned it, because the Old Testament wanted to honour women, not condemn them. But it's talking about the circumcision as a sign of being Jewish, having this privileged position vis-à-vis God.
And the point is, do you think really God was interested in having in-groups and out-groups, or was he actually interested in changed lives? So go back and read verse 25 again.
For circumcision is indeed of value if you obey the law, or you practice the law. That's actually more literally, practice or do it. But if you break the law, your circumcision becomes uncircumcision.
So if a man who is uncircumcised keeps the precepts of the law, that's the moral principles, not necessarily the Old Testament words, but will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision?
[24:00] Because ultimately God wants behaviour, action, and action lining up with your heart, not group identity. Then he who is physically uncircumcised, verse 27, but keeps the law will condemn you who have the written code and circumcision, but break the law.

So it's not just talking about hypocrisy, because the Bible isn't interested so much. I mean, it is really interested in hypocrisy, but what Paul is doing is trying to open up something about the human condition, and something about a way out of this problem that respects the valid longings and yearnings that God has put within you.
The point of this text, and the earlier part, I meant to mention it last week, isn't that teachers should stop teaching children how to behave and what's right and wrong.
It's not trying to say that parents should start, abdicate the responsibility of teaching a child what's good and right and things which are bad.
It's not saying that. It's how do you get to that without this problem of being moralistic and self-righteous. That's the problem, not the task. The solution we're going to come to in a moment keeps that as a valid thing that you need to do.
[25:09] But here's the problem with group identity, and it's an issue of presumption. You see, remember, you know, the guy, I can't remember the guy's name, the guy who launched all the shut, I know I'm touching on a raw nerve for people, all those COVID lockdowns was based on a model, you know, that was going to have millions, hundreds of millions of people killed.

And while he was doing that, what did he do? He kept meeting his lover and having adultery with somebody, even while he was causing everybody else to be shut down in lockdowns.
Like, that's the problem. We give ourselves a pass, right? People in in-groups give themselves mulligans. They flatter themselves too much to detect or hate our own sin.

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So, you know, if you're centering around Pierre Pauly, you say, oh, look at the liberals, what they just did. Oh, that's really, really terrible. Well, they themselves are doing the exact same thing, but that's different because, like, we're around Pierre. Or the other way around.
You know, yeah, we're all around Carney, we're all liberals. Look at how terrible those Pierre Pauly people are. And then somebody points out, you do the same thing. And they say, no, no, no, we're not doing the same thing. But really what they're doing is they're just agreeing that they're going to give themselves a pass.
[26:16] And so it's interesting. Go back to verse 17 for a second. It's all hinted at there, but it's not clear in the English. Verse 17, But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God, and there's this word boast.

And in the original language, there's two different senses of boast. And you need to understand from the context which one is going on. And one sense of it is a virtue, and one sense of it is a vice, is a bad thing.
One sense of it is a type of presumption. It's very interesting. I'm going to get the word slightly wrong, but those of you who like basketball, many, many years ago, when the Michael Jordan and the Bulls won their last NBA championship, their sixth won in eight years, and Steve Kerr, who's now the coach for Golden State Warriors, he was just a bit player, like a seventh-ranked player on the team or something like that.
And the person interviewed them after they'd won the NBA championship. They interviewed Michael, Steve Kerr, and some other person said, well, you know, how does it feel to be a really good player on a really, really good team?
And Steve Kerr said, that's not us. We're just the lucky average players who got to play with a basketball god, and he won the game. He was basically saying, if I wasn't on the same team as Michael Jordan, you wouldn't even be interviewing me.
[27:37] You probably wouldn't even know who I am. Michael Jordan carried the whole team on his shoulders. And in that type of sense, there's a type of boasting which is good. That was a really good sermon.

All things come of you, Father, and of your own have I given you. There seems to be some health in the congregation. Boy, if you know what we were really like, if you know what some of us were like before we knew Christ, you'd want to get 100 miles away from us.
It's just really what Christ has done for us. That's the type of boasting that God wants, a confidence in Christ. The other type of boasting is presumption. I don't really have to follow those rules because, I mean, I'm Jewish.
I don't really have to follow those rules because I'm woke. I don't really have to follow those rules because I'm really into Andrew Tate and Nick Fuentes. By the way, if you're into them, you really need to repent.
They're terrible, terrible, terrible people who will terribly lead you astray. Homophobic, anti-Semites, Nazi lovers.
[28:37] Stay away from them, by the way. But I say that because some young men are fascinated by those guys and they're really, really bad news. But the bottom line is, we think we get a pass.

Because you're an evangelical, because you're a Baptist, because you're a Pentecostal, because you're an Anglican, because you're this group or that, you have a type of presumption. That's the type that's all wrong and all bad.
And so that's the second aspect of the big problem, the human problem, is you don't practice, you don't have a good track record in doing what you teach.
So now, okay, now that I've depressed you all, and now that God's depressed you, and you're just going to think, yeah, yeah, I suck. I suck all the time. And the more I try to not suck, the more I suck. That's not the message. But here's the really surprising thing. What we expect now, out of our human condition, is that now, Paul is going to introduce the Christian rituals that you need to do, and the Christian rules that you need to follow, so that these human condition problems don't apply to you.
[29:52] That's what we expect. And he doesn't do it. He goes in a completely and utterly, shockingly different direction, but the direction he goes is exactly the direction we need.

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Look, it's not obvious, but it is once you see it. Look at verse 28 and 29. For no one is a Jew who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.
And by the way, you read the Old Testament prophets, you can find all sorts of prophets. You can find Moses saying that, actually, in the giving of the law. And then verse 29. But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart by the Holy Spirit, not by the letter, not by words. His praise, that is, one who has come into a proper relationship with God, is not from human beings, but from God. I'll read those two verses again. For no one is a Jew that is in a special relationship with God, who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision outward and physical.
But a Jew is one inwardly, and circumcision is a matter of the heart, by the Holy Spirit, not by the letter. His praise is not from man, but from God. If you could put up the third point, Claire, that would be very helpful.
[31:14] You need the Holy Spirit to circumcise your heart. You need the Holy Spirit to circumcise your heart. I need it too.

You see, it's funny. What he's basically saying is that all of the texts in the Old Testament about circumcision were a sign, a true sign, but the question that you have to ask is if it's a sign, what's it pointing to?
And what it's pointing to is a true and greater circumcision that would only come when the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world was to walk upon this earth and live the life that you should live but couldn't and die the death that you deserve and he didn't where he becomes the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.
If you go back and you read Genesis 12 to about, I can't remember, 20 or 21, there's a very interesting series of stories which capture what's going on here very well.
It sets the pattern. And in the ancient world, the idea of covenant was very common and there would be a warlord or a king or an emperor who would enter into a covenant with a group of lesser people maybe with a city that was going to come under his rule or a family or a tribe or a person and in that there would be things that would be set forward.
[32:37] I will be your great Lord and I will be your savior and your deliverer and you will be mine and we will have a relationship with each other and this is a special set-aside relationship and these are the things that you need to do and these are the things that I will do and you need to do these things and if you don't do these things here's all the punishments that are going to happen to you.

It's a little bit like I don't know a bit 70-ish. You go to a mafia don and you want a mafia don you want to come under the mafia's employee and he says I'll take you and my employee you know and you got to do this and you got to do this and you got to do this but you know if I catch you stealing I cut off your head.
If I catch you doing this I cut off your arm. If I catch you doing this I'm going to kill your wife and children. If I catch you doing this I'm going to skin you alive and kill you.
That's how a lot of people think God is by the way. And the amazing thing in the story of Abraham which is pointing ultimately to Christ is that when it comes time God makes this covenant with Abraham and he says I will be your Lord and you can be my person and from your seed all the nations of the world will be blessed and I will take you to myself and then when it comes time for the circums the part of the ceremony where the you know they lay out all of the things that you need to do and then when it comes time to have that ceremony marked and all of the things that the bad things that will happen to you if those the terms of the covenant aren't kept Abraham doesn't walk through that ceremony but God does for Abraham and so this gives us a bit of a sense about what's happening with the person of Jesus and why Paul is talking about all of this you see if you when we're going to do the Lord's Supper in a couple of moments we remember that Jesus said that by his coming and by his death and by his resurrection
God had created a new covenant a new covenant for people of every tribe and every nation of every language group of every type of sexuality he has made one covenant that you enter by faith and the sign of that is a variety of signs but the consequences for not being able to keep it fall on Jesus it's very interesting that in the garden the cup of God's wrath is drank by Christ since Jesus drinks the cup of God's wrath so that by faith in Christ you can drink the cup of the new covenant and so what Jesus in a sense is what God is saying is that when Jesus dies on the cross all of the all of the consequences and penalties that should fall on you if you can't keep the words of the covenant and can't keep the special relationship they actually fell on him and so when I put my faith and trust in Christ and he brings me into himself so that I am in union with Christ then all of those

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penalties for not keeping the law and not living up to what I teach all of those penalties that I deserve fall on him and this covenant of blessing of favor that goes even into eternity are now bestowed upon me and so that's why it says here that if you look back at verse 29 again but a Jew is one inwardly circumcision is a matter of the heart that's applying Christ we're in union with Christ and so at a very depth of who we are because that's what the heart is
[36:18] Christ that all those punishments and all those blessings that they have now come to me in my heart and they're brought by the Holy Spirit not by any particular words and the one who is praise who prays and is blessing and is excited about all of this is God the Father about what Christ has done for you and that's why every human being now how does this apply though for us then in terms of how we live well if you could put up the fourth point that would be very helpful you see Jesus the Holy Spirit the Father wants us to receive the gospel to be made right with God and then he desires that we preach the gospel to ourselves you preach the gospel to yourself day by day to become more Christ-like see that's the order and just very briefly I've reached my limit but I want to say a few things about how you preach the gospel to yourself and why that's so unbelievably important and it's so unbelievably important because Christians still have the human condition

I don't practice what I teach neither do you and that's not going to stop until we appear before God face to face and we become like Christ when the Holy Spirit completely and utterly makes us like Christ and we dwell in the new heaven and the new earth forever so how do we do this well really the whole structure of Romans tells us how that we preach the gospel to ourselves you see preaching the gospel to ourselves is not adoration of God that God is love and it's not remembering that God is love it's a matter of the fact that you don't just hear these words about Christ to become right with God and then you move on to something else you move on to therapy you move on to spiritual direction you move on to meditation techniques you move on to exercise and wealth techniques you move on to other types of things and all you need is to know Christ and give your life to him and that makes you his and then you move on to something else because the gospel doesn't apply to the rest of your life but it does and we'll use the example of the fact that many of us struggle with the idea that if people got to know us better they wouldn't like us the more they get to know us the less they'd like us and if you just meditate upon God's love that's a good thing to do but it's not going to be very helpful for your human condition you see what I need to do is I need
I need to preach the gospel to myself and that means first of all coming to Jesus and saying Jesus I live out of this lie about myself that the more people get to know me the less they'll like me and so I lie and I cajole and I joke and I avoid appointments and I avoid commitments and I do all of these types of things and it's just going to hurt me and I've done these things which are wrong and so we go and we acknowledge our sin and then we don't just think about God being love but we meditate upon the riches of the gospel and in particular is this I acknowledge and confess my sin before God and the problem in my heart which is tearing me down and then I meditate upon this profound truth that Christ was cut off from life and love and the Father's presence out of love for me my deep fear is that if people were to know who I really am that they would cut me off and I would be cut off from other people and from life itself and now
I understand I come to Jesus acknowledging and confessing this as a problem and I realize that Christ was cut off for me for me in my place and I am in him and the source of love himself the source of life himself smiles and is pleased at what Christ has done for me and he was cut off that I might know the Father's love forever and so the truth of the gospel that Christ was cut off for one like me afraid of being cut off by others and I can thank him and it is out of that humble place of acknowledging sin and that's just one particular example if you labor under anger if you labor under debt if you labor under shame if you labor under defeat if you labor under time after time after time after time and if you as we go through the book of Romans the structure is always this to come to God not in presumption and not in arrogance or merely meditating upon the attributes and qualities of God as wonderful and powerful as those are but to come to God acknowledging my sin and the fact that I don't do these things and I do these other things and I kick myself and I ruin my life and realizing how there's a particular rich an aspect of the gospel that specifically speaks to my situation and to thank him again that he was cut off so that I will not be cut off from the source of love and life and then to have an emotionally secure and intellectually secure and beautiful place to deal with the problems in my life confident in God's acceptance of me in Christ and we need to preach the gospel to ourselves and to each other and it is out of that that we can humbly say to a child you shouldn't steal you should be generous you should chair you shouldn't treat little girls that way to teenage

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boys you shouldn't treat a girl that way to teenage girls you shouldn't treat a teenage boy that way not out of a place of arrogance but a place of having been humbled and healed by the cross of Christ we need to preach the gospel to ourselves invite you to stand father you know those in this room who struggle or maybe don't they don't even struggle father they're just being beaten up day in and day out with this a lie that is whispered into their ear that if people got to know them they would like them less and father you know who we are in the room and we ask father that you would help these riches of the gospel father to speak to our heart and heal our heart heal our heart in a way which is humble and not presumptuous which is filled with gratitude which is conscious of sharing the human condition with other people in the same situation that humbles us so we don't lift our heads in prayer to you but really what we're doing is looking down our noses at others but we aren't looking down our noses at others but from the bottom and being held and surrounded by the love of Christ and what he has done for us on the cross so we look up to you father to see your praise your blessing upon us
all in the power of the Holy Spirit father we ask that you would help us to hear the gospel and help us to preach the gospel to ourselves and we ask these things in the name of Jesus your son and our savior amen

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