

HOW ABOUT THOSE WHO “GET RELIGION”? Romans 2:17-29

Int: In bygone days someone who walked the aisle, joined church, and got baptized was said to have “got religion.” Does getting religion count? In these verses aimed at Jews, Paul showed that getting religion, even the world’s highest and best religion, does indeed count. But maybe not in the way people may think. In fact getting religion can count *against* a man if it means

GETTING ADVANTAGE THAT BECOMES DISADVANTAGE 2:17-20

In this one long sentence Paul admitted their religion gave Jews certain spiritual advantages others did not have. But he warned them not to misunderstand this advantage. It did not insure automatic salvation but only put them in a better place to find God’s salvation in Jesus.

In fact, religious privilege just increases a person’s degree of accountability and results in greater condemnation if it never leads to Jesus. The Lord said, “Everyone to whom much was given, of him much will be required” (Lu 12:48). In the long run, advantages not taken advantage of, turn to disadvantages!

MAKING A PROFESSION THAT DOES NOT MATCH PRACTICE 2:21-24

Paul raised five questions (2:23 is actually a question), asked in such a way that they demand “Yes” answers. He charged these unbelievably religious people with a shocking credibility gap. They did not keep the law they taught.

Many seem to want a religion that makes them feel respectable without demanding that they be respectable.

In the long run, a religion that does not move a person toward godly living is worthless. It counts against those who profess it.

HAVING SYMBOLS THAT POINT TO NO REALITY 2:25-29

YHWH commanded every male Jew to mark his body with circumcision as an outward sign that he had an inward relationship with God. Unfortunately some began to substitute the physical mark for the spiritual reality. Some rabbis even taught that no circumcised Jew would ever go to hell. They said Abraham sat before the doors of hell and would not let any circumcised Israelite go there. It became a mechanical way of salvation.

No sign can guarantee the relationship it pictures. Someone could have either without the other. Just because a woman puts on a wedding ring does not mean she is married! In God’s eyes, circumcision without the inner work of the Spirit remains uncircumcision. So also does baptism remain unbaptism and church membership non-membership apart from the Spirit’s work within the person!

Con: Not even a God-given religion, like Judaism, or even Christianity, can save. Only Jesus saves. “He who has the Son has life” (1 John 5:12).