

The Village Church – Rancho Santa Fe
Adult Bible Study – Week #3 – 2026 & 2027

Romans 2:17 – 3:8

September 29 & 30 2026

PLEASE NOTE THE DIATRIBE EXPLANATION AT THE END OF THE NOTES – PAGE 3

1. Paul confronts the belief that inherited religious privilege equals personal righteousness. **[Romans 2:17–24]**
2. Paul challenges religious insiders who assume their covenant status makes them spiritually secure. **[Romans 2:17–20]**
3. Possessing the Law did not mean the insider was actually obeying it. **[Romans 2:21–23]**
4. Inherited privilege does not equal personal righteousness. **[Romans 2:17–24]**
5. Romans uses an imagined argument with an insider listener. **[Romans 2:17; 3:1–8]. (Diatribes) ***
6. The listener relies on having the Law, knowing God's will, and belonging to the covenant community. **[Romans 2:17–20]**
7. Paul lists reliance on the Law, boasting in God, knowing His will, approving what is excellent, and seeing oneself as guide, light, instructor, and teacher. **[Romans 2:17–20]**
8. These gifts are not false or worthless, but they can become a shield against honest self-examination. **[Romans 2:21–23]**
9. Paul asks whether those who teach others also teach themselves. **[Romans 2:21]**
10. Paul points to condemning sin publicly while excusing it privately. **[Romans 2:21–23]**
11. Subtle hypocrisy is public conviction without private obedience. **[Romans 2:21–24]**
12. Religious knowledge can become a way to judge others while refusing to let God's truth judge us. **[Romans 2:21–23]**
13. Paul warns that God's name is blasphemed when His people do not live consistently with His Word. **[Romans 2:24]**
14. When the world sees a gap between religious language and lived character, it may dismiss God rather than praise Him. **[Romans 2:24]**
15. The greatest threat to gospel credibility is not only outside hostility, but inside inconsistency. **[Romans 2:23–24]**
16. Paul moves from behavior to identity by discussing circumcision. **[Romans 2:25]**
17. Circumcision was the visible covenant badge marking heritage, identity, and privilege. **[Romans 2:25–29; Genesis 17:9–14]**

18. No outward badge can replace inward obedience. **[Romans 2:25–27]**
19. Paul does not dismiss Israel’s privileges, but he refuses to let privilege replace repentance and faith. **[Romans 2:25–29; 3:1–2]**
20. Paul teaches that true covenant identity is inward, a matter of the heart by the Spirit. **[Romans 2:28–29]**
21. The true mark of belonging to God is not merely outward visibility, but inward work by the Spirit. **[Romans 2:28–29]**
22. People may rely on theological knowledge, church leadership, church legacy, philanthropy, moral reputation, long membership, or social standing. **[Romans 2:17–20, 28–29]**
23. Good religious gifts become dangerous when they protect us from honest examination. **[Romans 2:21–23]**
24. The badge cannot substitute for a heart transformed by the Spirit. **[Romans 2:29]**
25. Because true praise comes from God, believers do not have to live for applause, image, or comparison. **[Romans 2:29]**
26. If outward badges cannot save, does Jewish heritage have any advantage? **[Romans 3:1]**
27. Israel’s advantage was real because God entrusted them with the oracles of God. **[Romans 3:2]**
28. Being entrusted with truth brings responsibility, not exemption from judgment. **[Romans 3:2–4]**
29. Israel’s advantage was meant for stewardship, witness, and faithfulness. **[Romans 3:2; Deuteronomy 4:5–8]**
30. Paul addresses the claim that if human sin highlights God’s righteousness, then God may be unfair to judge. **[Romans 3:5]**
31. Paul rejects that logic completely; grace never makes sin harmless. **[Romans 3:6–8]**
32. God remains faithful, truthful, righteous, and just even when people are unfaithful. **[Romans 3:3–4]**
33. Both insiders and outsiders are left empty-handed before God. **[Romans 3:9–20]**
34. Grace is not a reward for privilege, performance, or religious appearance; it is the unearned mercy of Jesus Christ. **[Romans 3:21–24]**
35. **Final takeaway:** Paul removes every false refuge so that people will depend entirely on the unearned, unshakable grace of Jesus Christ. **[Romans 3:21–26]**

Reflections

1. Where am I tempted to confuse religious familiarity with spiritual maturity?
2. What “badge” or credential do I tend to rely on?
3. Where might God be inviting me to move from outward appearance to inward transformation?
4. What is one concrete act of humility, repentance, or obedience I can practice this week?

What Was a Classical Diatribe?

In the ancient Graeco-Roman world, a diatribe was an interactive teaching method characterized by several distinct features.

The diatribe was not an angry rant or a bitter attack. Instead, it was a conversational, engaging teaching style. It featured a lively dialogue between the writer and an imaginary or real conversational partner (an *interlocutor*).

Paul often used the diatribe method throughout the New Testament.

- **The Imaginary Interlocutor:** The speaker creates a fictional dialogue partner (an "interlocutor") who represents the typical mindset of the audience.
- **Anticipated Objections:** The speaker voices the inner objections, rationalizations, or defensive arguments the audience is thinking but hasn't said out loud.
- **Rapid-Fire Q&A:** The text shifts into a breathless, quick cadence of short questions and blunt answers.
- **Reductio ad Absurdum:** The speaker pushes the opponent's logic to its absolute extreme to show how ridiculous and unsustainable it is.