

proud of, can they actually help a person become justified before God? Paul says no, and actually, the way he phrases the second blessing indicates the very problem: the Jew “rely” on the Law, which cannot save. The Law was not designed to bring salvation - it was designed to expose our sinfulness.

Paul begins these verses in a very harsh manner, because he is talking to his own people, the Jews, who are proud of their lineage, but are not right with God. This irritates Paul greatly, first of all because they are wrong, and second of all because that pride is coming between them and the gospel. Their pride came from a misunderstanding of why they had been given the law: they thought they were special and superior to other peoples. But actually, they were to be examples to others. In the same way, many of us who have families of Christians going back decades can become proud, as though our parents’ attendance at church somehow reflects on us. We easily fall into the same trap that the first century Jews did! “The trouble with assuming that one is a guide to others is that it so easily leads to the assumption that one is naturally superior to them. But the Jew had no natural superiority, and Paul complains accordingly.” Paul’s point is that our past and lineage may be honorable and something to be proud of—but they do not, and cannot, make us right before God.

The truth is: Nothing which is outward can save us. “The basic contrast in these verses is an ‘inner/outer’ contrast; a contrast between what can be seen with the eye - physical circumcision, Jewish birth - and what only God ultimately sees - the changed heart. So, we can see as we look at the book of Romans that we have all sinned and stand in a desperate for the forgiveness of Christ. Paul uses Scripture to show how needy and desperate our situation is. We aren’t just in a tough spot—apart from Christ, there is not a *single good person*.

Personal Application

How has your understanding of the gospel changed? How does it affect your life and how you view yourself and others?

Prayer

Lord Jesus, cause us to see there is nothing we can do to save ourselves from sin. Only through You can we be righteous before God and fulfill Your purpose for life.



Week 2 – The Not So Good News

Announcements

Biblical Foundations – Monday nights | LCC

Doctor & Dentist Dinner – March 14 | email

damos@churchoftheking.com

Servolution – March 26 – April 4

Kid’s Camp – June 21 – 24, June 28 – July 1 | Loranger, LA

VBS – June 7 – 11 | LCC

Warm-Up

What do you think makes Christianity different from all other religions? What do you think is important about these differences?

Word

In this message series, entitled **What is the Gospel?**, we are spending six weeks studying the first eight chapters of the book of Romans. In our lesson, entitled **The Not So Good News**, let’s dive back into the book of Romans as we look at 1:18 to 3:20. One of the things that makes Christianity distinct from all of the other world religions is the fact that we have a Savior. Like other religions we have a book, and we have places of worship, and we have preachers, teachers, and evangelists - but one of the things that make us so unique is that we have a Savior. In no other world religion is there this figure like we have of Christ who comes and says, “Not only am I going to tell you how to live your life, but I am personally going to take upon myself, the consequence of your sin.” No other religion has a Savior like that, and that is what makes Christianity unique. Today, as we continue our series, we will learn

the starting point for our understanding the difference that Christ has made in our lives, is all built upon a premise that, apart from Christ, you are not a good person who occasionally does bad things. The Bible says, and while we hate the S-word, but the Bible says that we are sinners, apart from Christ, that we are bad people that occasionally do good things. It's not very popular, it's not very American, it's not good for your self-esteem, but we have a problem that runs very, very deep. We are born sinners. You're not a sinner because you sin, it's worse than that. You're a sinner because of something you have no control over. You're a sinner because at the core of your nature you were born a sinner. The fact that we are natural born sinners, is what Paul makes clear for us in Romans chapters one through three. Paul takes some time to look at **The Not So Good News** of the gospel. So, in the remainder of this lesson, we are going to look at some **Common Excuses** that you might hear people say when they deal with sin.

Excuse #1: I didn't know, so I'm not responsible. Start by reading Romans 1:20-21 together as a group. Paul knew part of the audience he was addressing was a pagan culture, a people that were simply stumbling after God in the darkness. However, Paul shows that no one lives without some knowledge of God. In fact, Paul points out that creation itself speaks to the undeniable truth of who God is. The Creator, Who made all that we see around us, speaks to the conscience of every man and woman that God is real. Some have even asked, "What about those on an island who have never heard the gospel?" To them, Paul would respond "God communicates Himself through creation." **Read Psalm 19:1 together as a group.** God holds all people responsible for their refusal to acknowledge what He has shown them of Himself through creation. The evidence is in, and it's very clear! The starry universe, plant and animal life, the human body and the human baby, all speak clearly and loudly there is a supreme Creator who has revealed Himself as God! If a person will respond to the revelation that he or she has, even if it is solely natural or general revelation, as theologians have called it, God will judge them according to the light they have. Deep in the heart of every man and woman, they know God exists and they know the difference between right and wrong. They can accept it, or they can harden their hearts to truth. Thus, no one is without excuse. **The truth is:** We are all accountable with our conscience to the light that we see. Even if we never hear the

gospel in true form – we are responsible as we look at creation around us, to see that there is a God of power and order that created and holds this world together. Let's look at the second excuse:

Excuse #2: Well, I'm not as bad as they are! Read Romans 2:1-4 together as a group. Here, Paul is talking to us — we are all sinners and without excuse! In verse 1, Paul says that those who judge others condemn themselves in the very act of judging. It is easy for us to assume that Paul is talking about other people, and that his judgments aren't aimed at us. But these judgments are! Paul doesn't say, "Now, those people were really bad, and I know you aren't like that..." No! Paul says that we have no excuse either! And in condemning other people for their idolatry and sin, we condemn ourselves for the very same thing - for our self-righteousness is just making our own goodness into an idol. Paul's charge that we are guilty of the same things we condemn, is meant to startle us—we are so sure that other people are the bad ones; surely, we aren't as bad as they are! But Paul says that we are all in the same boat. You see, God judges based on our actions. Paul makes is very clear that there are only two fates in store for everyone—no half-way judgments will be rendered. Either eternal life or death—those are the only two options; Paul leaves no room for any other. The idea of sinning with or without the Law is meant to divide the world into two groups – the Jews and Gentiles. In Paul's time, Jews - like himself - thought of humanity as being Jews, God's people, and Gentiles — all the other people. For the book of Romans, Jews and Non-Jews' main distinguishing characteristic is that Jews grew up with God's divinely-given Law, and Gentiles simply grew up knowing Roman Law. But Paul argues that possessing the biblical Law cannot actually save anyone, because "the law can justify only when it is obeyed perfectly; reading it, hearing it taught and preaching, studying it—none of these, nor all of them together, can justify." And only one person ever obeyed the Law perfectly, and that's Jesus Christ. **The truth is:** No human being measures up to God's requirement of righteousness.

Excuse #3: My family has been Christian for generations! In Romans 2:17-29, Paul makes it clear that the Jews aren't helped by their past! Paul lists three privileges (rightly) claimed by Jews: "belonging to the chosen people, reliance on the Law and a special relationship with God." But while these are all things to be legitimately