

Bibles???

The Word of God is the Absolute Truth and the Final Authority

Turn your bibles with me to Romans 2

We are continuing our verse-by-verse study through this very powerful letter that the Apostle Paul wrote to the believers in Rome (and us) about the foundations of Christianity.

Why everyone needs Jesus –

How the just shall live by faith

Paul has something he wants to reveal to the reader – the gospel of grace

But before he reveals it to them – he has to provide the dark background so that God's solution to the problem will shine the brightest.

Remember the illustration of the jeweler who wants to set the perfect background for showing how beautiful and brilliant the diamond he / she wants to reveal is.

So - Paul is making the case to the reader that all of human race, apart from Jesus Christ, is condemned by God – which means at one point, He will judge the world.

All of human race, apart from Christ

The openly rebellious sinner – condemned by God

The self righteous individual – condemned by God

The religious individual – condemned by God

The problem is that the openly rebellious sinner, the self righteous individual, the religious individual –

They reject God's solution – they reject the gospel of grace because they have a false sense of security that they are exempt from God's judgment.

The openly rebellious sinner will conclude – there is no hell or they will strip God from His attributes – God will accept me the way I am.

The self righteous individual who believes that they will be exempt from God's judgment because they are not like the openly rebellious sinner – they do good.

When asked at the drive through if they want to round up to the nearest dollar to support some cause – they say sure – because they are good.

They go to church because they are good

They think God is looking down at them looking to see if they do good – but that is not God's heart

God wants to have communion with them.

God wants us to love Him in the same way that He loved us.

He wants us to surrender our life to Him instead of worrying about how good we are – because we are all going to fall short if we use “good” as a standard to be exempt from His judgment.

He is not saying we shouldn't do good – He wants us to stop relying on it in our relationship with Him.

Again false sense of security

And last week we began to look at the religious individual who felt they were exempt from God's judgment because of their heritage – Paul used the Jew as an example

They had a false sense of security because they were descendants of Abraham, because God had given them the law –

And today, we are going to look at the reason behind their false sense of security -that they were exempt from God's judgment because they were circumcised.

And so what Paul is going to do in our text this morning – is reveal to them that circumcision will not save them.

And in doing so – it will dismantle every religious person's false assurance that they will be exempt from judgment by putting their trust in anything apart from Jesus Christ.

Let's pray...

The Apostle Paul as he wrote this letter

Understood very well that a good portion of those that were going to be reading letter would be religious people.

In particular and in context - the religious Jew

Paul understood that predominantly most of the Jews were relying on their religion to be right with God.

I am a Jew – therefore exempt from judgment

In their mind -

God gave them the law – therefore they know His will, they know the difference between right and wrong – therefore, exempt from judgment.

The problem, as we discussed last week, was they were simply hearers of the law and not doers of the law.

And so in their disobedience to the law – they were actually bringing greater condemnation upon themselves.

The same law that gave them a false sense of security was condemning them because they failed to keep it.

Same thing that Paul spoke about the good person –

You are going to place your trust in the law – you are going to have to keep it perfectly.

Because if you violate one of them – you violate them all.

But that is not all -

[Rom 2:23-29 NKJV] 23 You who make your boast in the law, do you dishonor God through breaking the law?

What Paul is saying here is that because they have placed their trust in their heritage and in receiving the law and knowing the law but not practicing the law – they are in fact, dishonoring God.

They are deceiving themselves into thinking that everything is ok.

The same thing applies to the individual today who deceives themselves into thinking they have a right relationship with God apart from Christ.

But I go to church

But I have a bible

But I memorize scripture

But I teach Sunday School

But I teach from the pulpit

But I serve in church

But where is the relationship????

And because there is no relationship –

What comes out of their mouth doesn't match up with the way they live their lives.

Because this can only happen through abiding in Christ – through a genuine relationship with Him.

They believed in God in their head – but they lived their lives as if He didn't exist.

This is what Jesus told the religious leaders in Matt 15

[Mat 15:8-9 NKJV] 8 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, And honor Me with [their] lips, But their heart is far from Me. 9 And in vain they worship Me, Teaching [as] doctrines the commandments of men.' "

It is the individual who acts one way on Sunday –

They lift up their hands in worship

They draw near to Him with their mouths

But their hearts are far from Him when they go home.

They live their lives as if He doesn't even exist.

And when we do this – the next verse is true.

24 For "the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you," as it is written.

Because of their hypocritical living –

Paul tells the religious individual that many unbelievers blaspheme the name of God because of the blatant hypocrisy of those whose lives don't match the faith they claim to hold so dear.

We find a perfect example of this in the life of David

When he was confronted by the prophet Nathan

[2Sa 12:12-14 NKJV] 12 'For you did [it] secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.' " 13 So David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the LORD." And Nathan said to David, "The LORD also has put away your sin; you shall not die. 14 "However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also [who is] born to you shall surely die."

What was one of the consequences of David's sin – he misrepresented God

And instead of drawing people to God

His actions actually repelled people from God

Church – the world is watching us

Lord help us represent You in a right way

Help us to not be offensive and misrepresent who You are

We don't want to be like Moses who because of his anger, struck the rock in front of all the people – and misrepresented God by showing that God was angry at them.

When He wasn't angry

And God told Moses, because you misrepresented Me –

Because as I was trying to reach out to the people and love them and bring them into a relationship – here you are, screaming and yelling and freaking out – and because you misrepresented Me, you are not going into the land.

Church,

There can be times in our walk where our behavior will then lead to blasphemy of the very God that we love.

And the main reason is because we are no longer living a love relationship but now we are living a legalistic relationship and trying to impose that on others.

That is what the Pharisees did

That is what the individual who places their trust in religion does

They misrepresent God in doing so – it leads to people not wanting to have anything with God.

25 For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

Turn to Genesis 17

[Gen 17:6-11 NKJV] 6 "I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you. 7 "And I will establish My covenant between Me and you and your descendants after you in their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and your descendants after you. 8 "Also I give to you and your descendants after you the land in which you are a stranger, all the land of Canaan, as an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." 9 And God said to Abraham: "As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. 10 "This [is] My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; 11 "and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you.

The purpose of circumcision was two-fold

Identification and illustration

Identification - It was a sign or a symbol of the Covenant that God made with Abraham which identified them as God's covenant people—

Illustration - as God's covenant people, He desired them to 'cut away' or to remove from their hearts and lives all that was unclean and walk with Him in purity, holiness, and obedience.

God makes this very clear throughout the Old Testament

[Jer 4:4 NKJV] 4 Circumcise yourselves to the LORD, And take away the foreskins of your hearts, You men of Judah and inhabitants of Jerusalem, Lest My fury come forth like fire, And burn so that no one can quench [it], Because of the evil of your doings."

You see they began to confuse physical circumcision, which God only intended to be an outward ritual that symbolized an inward reality (a pure heart devoted to God)—and they began to look at it as though it brought them righteousness.

I am a Jew, I am physically circumcised – and in their minds, that equaled salvation.

Here is the thing church –

The rite of circumcision was a beautiful thing – when we grasp the totality of what it meant to be circumcised.

—it was like a wedding ring between God and the Jewish people which spoke of love and commitment—much like an actual wedding ring does in marriage.

My wedding ring is a symbol of my marriage covenant – it isn't marriage – just a symbol.

If I take my wedding ring off or if I were to lose my wedding ring – I am still married.

But even though a wedding ring is a beautiful symbol of the marriage covenant—without the commitment and fidelity – it is just a gold band on my finger.

For the Jew – circumcision without the commitment to God and without the fidelity to God – their circumcision was equivalent to a wedding ring worn by an individual who is an adulterer or an adulteress.

This is exactly what Paul is telling these religious Jews

You are wearing the ring / the identification

You are clinging to the ring – you are trusting the ring.

But you forgot all about the illustration /

you left out the commitment

you left out the fidelity

This was the case with the Jews –

But what about today for the believer –

Ask someone the question?

Are you a Christian?

Are you born again?

And many times – this is what you will hear....

Well, I was baptized as a child

I was baptized as an adult

I have attended such and such church for 30 years

I have faithfully take communion all of my life

I am a Lutheran, a Methodist, a Calvarite

You know what you don't hear?

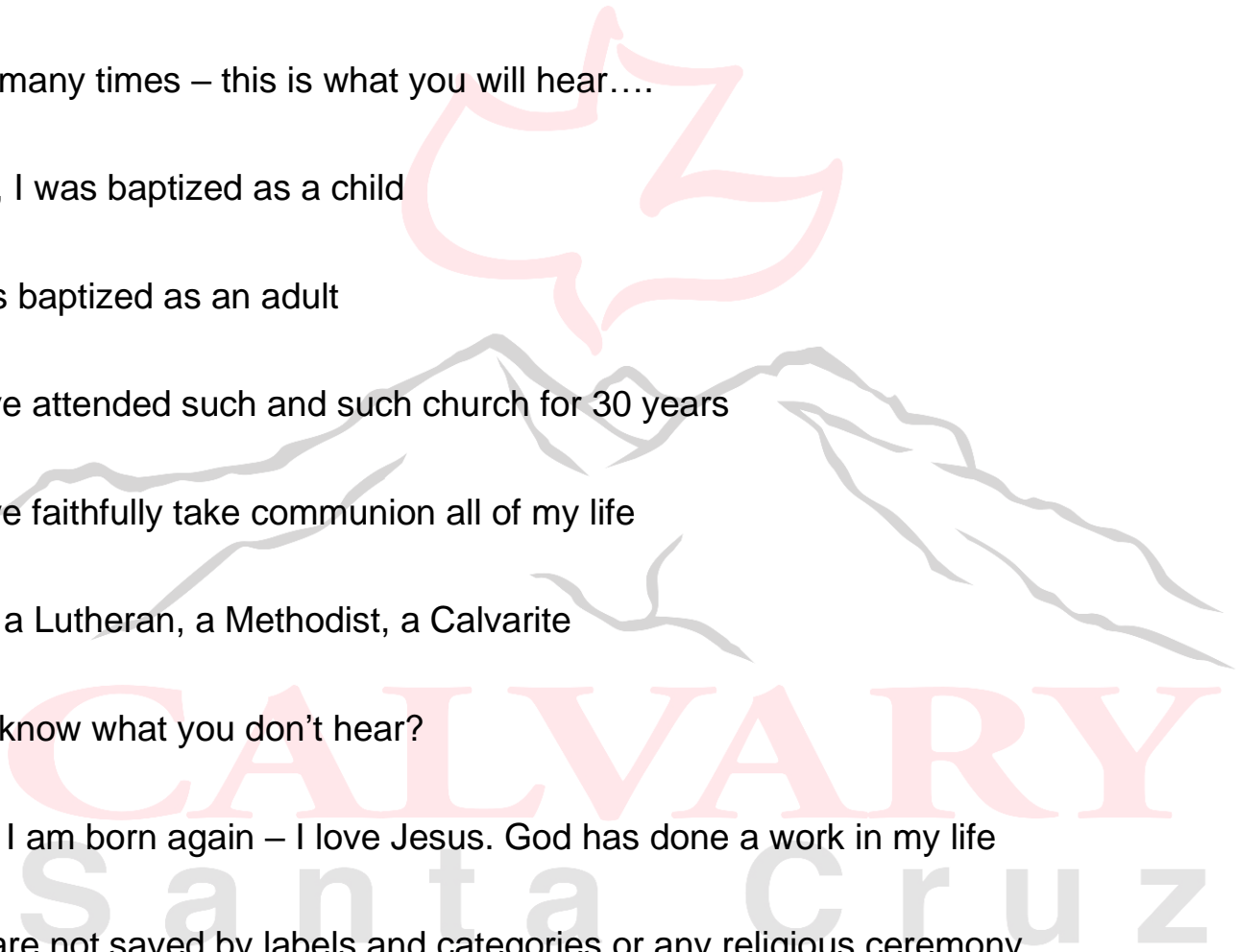
Yes, I am born again – I love Jesus. God has done a work in my life

We are not saved by labels and categories or any religious ceremony

We are saved by the precious blood of Jesus Christ

By faith

It's His grace



It's a personal salvation

It's a personal relationship

It's a love relationship

So we don't want to fall back into religion.

26 Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision? 27 And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, [even] with [your] written [code] and circumcision, [are] a transgressor of the law?

Paul poses an interesting question to the Jew who has placed his trust in circumcision and religion apart from Christ –

If a Gentile – guided by his conscious – if he or she was to keep the law, – what would that say about his/her relationship with God?

Would the Gentile be justified over the Jew who had the law and circumcision but did not keep the law.

Now to be clear – Paul is not saying that a Jew or a Gentile is able to keep the law perfectly.

He has already made this point earlier in this chapter.

He's simply presenting a hypothetical question - to show his Jewish readers they can't trust in circumcision as some kind of automatic entrance ticket to heaven.

Paul is going to tell us that the only way a Gentile (or a Jew) can fulfill the Law is by putting their faith in Jesus as their Savior (which is the ultimate point he is making).

And then Paul says something that would certainly have shocked the religious Jew who was reading this letter –

That a Gentile who was righteous before God because he/she had placed their faith in Jesus – that Gentile would judge over the Jew, who was of the lineage, who had received the law and was also circumcised – but rejected Jesus.

Mark this verse down -

[Mat 12:41 NKJV] 41 “The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah [is] here.

After being swallowed up by the great fish and thrown up by the fish, Jonah finally goes to Nineveh – and he delivers a very short, straight to the point sermon to the people of Nineveh without a lot of good news.

The sermon – in 40 days, you are going to be wiped out. Ha ha ha ha ha!!!!!!

But because the people of Nineveh got the message – they repented.

And God always honors repentance.

Remember, repentance is turning from the way we are living and turn to God and He will honor that turning.

Nineveh responded to Jonah (a small glimpse of light)

The religious Jews rejected the greater light, Jesus and everything that He did and said

Greater light requires greater judgment -

28 For he is not a Jew who [is one] outwardly, nor [is] circumcision that which [is] outward in the flesh; 29 but [he is] a Jew who [is one] inwardly; and circumcision [is that] of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise [is] not from men but from God.

Translation – not every Jew is a Jew

Let me explain -

In John 8 – Jesus is having a conversation with the religious Jews

[Jhn 8:39, 44 NKJV] 39 They answered and said to Him, "Abraham is our father."

Jesus said to them, "If you were Abraham's children, you would do the works of Abraham. ...

By the way – the works of Abraham is faith

He believed God

So if you are Abraham's children – then you are going to have His characteristics and you are going to have faith yourself

That is what Jesus is telling them.

Here is Jesus' answer to them.

44 "You are of [your] father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own [resources], for he is a liar and the father of it.

Again, they had the heritage, they had the law, they were circumcised – but that didn't mean they were saved.

This is an argument that Paul is going to make throughout this letter.

Abraham first two sons –

Ishmael and Isaac

They both had his blood - heritage

Both of them circumcised

Yet only one of them was the son of the promise

One of them had to have faith in his heart to be saved – which one was it? Isaac.

Isaac walked up Mt Moriah with Abraham while carrying the wood that was intended for him to be sacrificed on

He allowed Abraham to tie him up and lay him on top of the wood.

Isaac had faith in his heart

But that is not all -

Then Paul is going to remind his Jewish readers that even Abraham was declared righteous by God on account of his faith – some 14 years before God commanded him to circumcise himself and his household.

He was righteous without being circumcised – by faith.

Does circumcision have value – Paul is going to say, yes – if you keep the law

But what if you break the law –

Paul then argues that their religious ritual has no value

Now – let's bring it closer to home

What value is there in baptism – none if the individual being baptized does not identify with Christ

That person is just getting wet

But -

If we identify with Jesus Christ in His life, in His love, in His resurrection from the dead – it has great value

Same thing when we partake of communion

If we don't identify with Jesus – if we don't have a connection to Jesus – we are simply eating crackers and drinking juice

But if we have a connection with Jesus – great value.

Religion cannot take away sin – only Christ can

The religious Jew had the external mark on the flesh to testify to their religiosity

For the true believer – our marks are not external – they are always internal

[Rom 8:16 NKJV] 16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God,

So for the believer it is the mark of service, it is the mark of love, but it is also the mark of obedience – we are doers of the word and not just hearers of the word.

This is why Jesus says –

[Jhn 13:35 NKJV] 35 “By this all will know that you are My disciples,

Is it by the external marks?

Baptism

Going to church

Partaking of communion

Circumcision

No

By this all will know that you are My disciples if you have love for one another.”

The internal marks – the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives – begins to display itself on the outside

Let's pray...

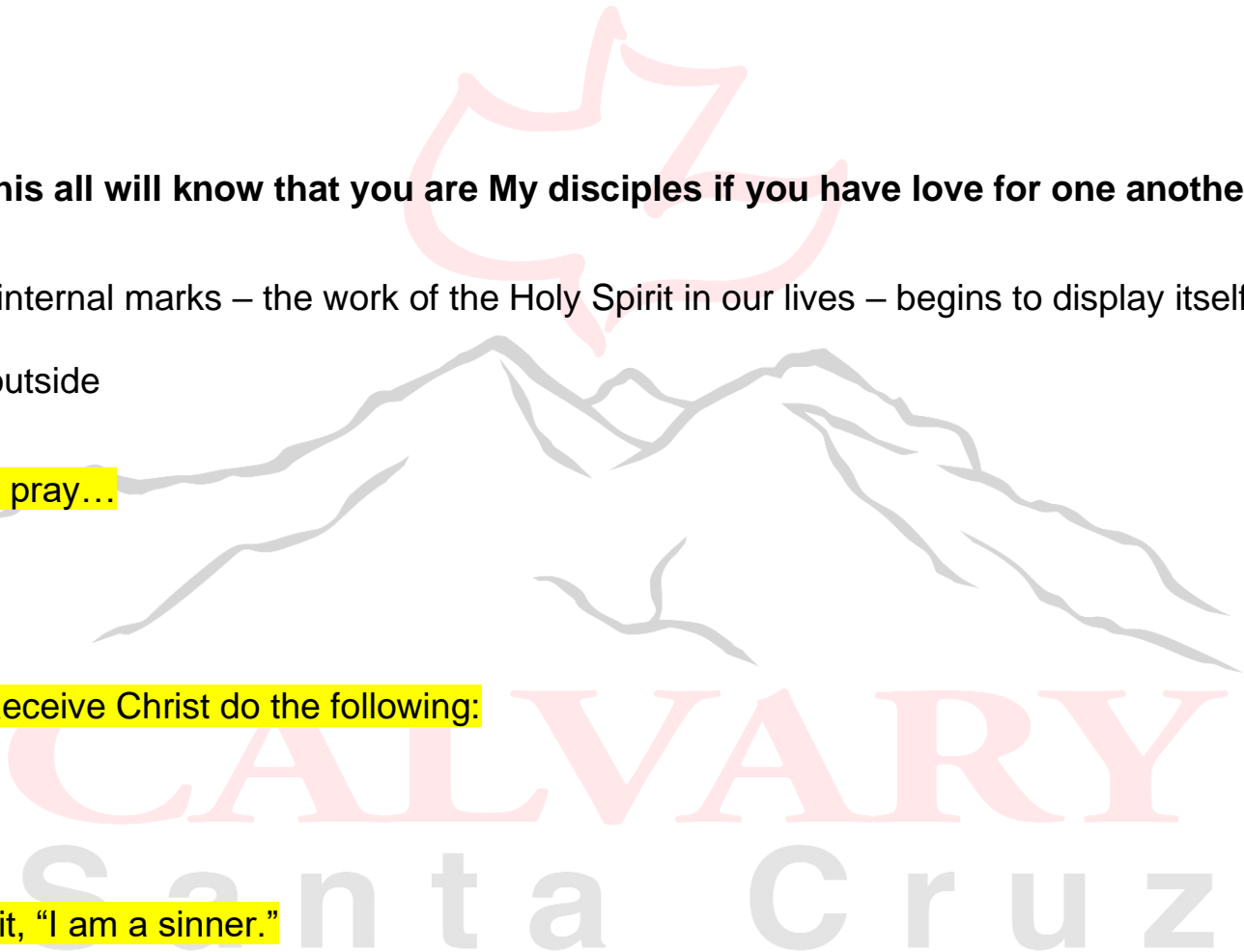
To Receive Christ do the following:

Admit, "I am a sinner."

Confess and be willing to turn from your sin.

Believe, by faith that Jesus Christ died for you on the cross.

Receive, through prayer, Jesus Christ into your heart and receive eternal life.



Dear Lord Jesus,

I know that I am a sinner and need Your forgiveness. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins. Please forgive me for my sins and cleanse me by Your blood. I accept You by faith as my personal Lord and Savior. Give me a thirst for Your Word and Help me to follow You all of my days. In Jesus' name I pray, Amen.

[Phi 3:1-3 NKJV] 1 Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. For me to write the same things to you [is] not tedious, but for you [it is] safe. 2 Beware of dogs, beware of evil workers, beware of the mutilation! 3 For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh,

we are the circumcision,

We have been set aside by the Lord to worship Him

And when we are doing what we were created to do – which is worship Him

We are the most blessed

[Num 6:24-26 NLT] 24 '

May the LORD bless you and protect you.

May the LORD smile on you and be gracious to you.

May the LORD show you his favor and give you his peace.'

