

BIBLE TEACHING AND WORSHIP GUIDE



FOR THE HOME-BASED CHURCH

Produced Weekly

“Why Being Religious Is Not Enough”
Romans 2:1-3:20

Copy this sheet for the Gathering Time, Bible Study, and Worship Experience leaders for the next meeting of the church.

Leaders' Responsibilities:

Important: Each person who will be leading one of the three parts of a session during a Unit of sessions needs to have access to the "Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study". That information is often provided at the beginning of that Unit of sessions. The weekly session "Background" located in the Teacher Preparation is much more specific to that day's study.

1. **The Gathering Time Leader** will gather all of the people together and help them prepare their minds and hearts for a wonderful worship experience before God. His/her responsibility is to introduce the congregation to the theme (content) and the Scripture that will be central to their worship experience for the day.

2. **The Bible Study Leader** will then help the people understand what the Scriptures have to say and teach us about the content of the study for the day. He/she will guide the people to make a general application of the study (ie: How does this Bible study apply to people today?)

3. **The Worship Time Leader** has the responsibility to use the theme and Scriptures to guide the congregation to make personal commitments to God's will for each one in regard to the study for the day. He/she will use others to lead in the music, taking the offering, ministry moment comments, and other activities and parts of the **Worship Time** that can aid in participatory worship.

Prior to this Coming Session:

Gathering Time Leader:

Ask an older child or youth to read the brief Scripture passage. Give it to him/her ahead of time and ask that he/she practice reading. This reminds both young people and older people that reading Scripture should be done prayerfully – and powerfully.

Bible Study Leader:

Worship Time Leader:

Choose the songs to be sung today. Try to find the music for "The Longer I Serve Him" by William J. Gaither. Someone in the church might have a Gaither video in which it is sung. Play the video as an introduction to the worship time in which this song is discussed.

Ask someone to read the section "**Praying for the World**" and lead in prayer for the Dongxiang of China. Ask someone who will not be embarrassed at the difficulty in pronunciation.

Music Sources:

"The Longer I Serve Him" *Hymns for the Family of God*, #623

"O How He Loves You and Me" *Hymns for the Family of God*, #622

"Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus" *Hymns for the Family of God*, #621

"When I Survey the Wondrous Cross" Many hymnals

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Copy this section for the Gathering Time leader.

Gathering Time: (Suggested time: 15 minutes)

“Why Being Religious Is Not Enough”

Focal Text

Romans 2:1-13, 17-29; 3:1-2, 9-20

Background Text

Romans 2:1-3:20

Main Idea

No matter how religious or “good” a person may be, no one may come to God in any way other than through faith.

Question to Explore

“In what things do ‘good’ people trust instead of trusting in God?”

Teaching Aim

To lead participants to explain why human qualifications, even goodness or religious outlook, do not result in salvation.

Gathering together:

Have a youth or older child read the following as a call to worship.

My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:

And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.

My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all;

and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father’s hand.

John 10:27-29 – King James Version

Pray: Thank you, Lord, for the sweet assurance that once we have made a commitment to follow you, that you will yourself protect us from harm forever. Amen.

First thoughts:

A caring mother shared her concern for her university aged son who is struggling to make sense of his faith. Although he was baptized as a young boy, his Christian

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training was limited to that given by his parents. Hockey, school and work, as well as his mother's poor health, made it difficult for him to attend church regularly.

A religious studies class at the university and friendship with non-Christians has led to a true crisis of faith. His argument seems old to some, but he feels that institutional Christianity is full of hypocrisy. He would say loudly with Paul, ***“You, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? You who brag about the law, do you dishonour God by breaking the law? As it is written: ‘God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you’*** (Romans 2:23-24).

Those who love this young man pray that a friend, a mentor, a genuine Christian will enter his world of university studies and prove the authentic power of the grace of God to change lives. As we study today may we be reminded that every new generation of young people, every new immigrant who first encounters Christianity, every young child born into the church family will be watching to see the way in which we live out our “profession of faith”. May it never be said of us, ***“God’s name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you.”***

Closing the Gathering Time:

Take time at this point to mention items of prayer concern for the church, announcements of ministry or activities, and anything else that needs to be shared with or by the congregation. Pray for these needs. Remember to praise God in prayer.

Break time! Take five minutes between sessions. Encourage children to use the washroom so that they won't need to leave during the Bible Study time.

Distribute youth/adult Bible study outlines or paper for note-taking, if available.

Also hand out the activity sheets for preschool and younger children to use during Bible Study and/or worship.

Note to the Bible Study Leader: Suggested teaching time for the Bible study should be about 35 minutes. Use the “Teacher Preparation” for your personal study during the week before the session. Use the “Bible Study Plan” for the actual session.

Teacher Preparation

“Why Being Religious Is Not Enough”

Focal Text

Romans 2:1-13, 17-29; 3:1-2, 9-20

Background Text

Romans 2:1-3:20

Main Idea

No matter how religious or “good” a person may be, no one may come to God in any way other than through faith.

Question to Explore

“In what things do ‘good’ people trust instead of trusting in God?”

Teaching Aim

To lead participants to explain why human qualifications, even goodness or religious outlook, do not result in salvation.

Introduction to your personal study:

“Why do bad things happen to good people?”

Have you ever asked, or heard someone ask, this question? It is legitimate to ask why bad things happen, for each of us needs to determine if a bad event is a result of our own sin, something of which we need to repent. However, this passage states clearly that there are no “good people” in the world. Paul pointed out that “there is no one righteous, not even one” (3:10), and “the whole world [is] held accountable to God” (3:19). Later he stated, “For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (3:23). We may not know why bad things happen, but we do know that there are no “good people.”

This thought may come as a shock to many. Many people take comfort in the fact that they are not as bad as someone else, or that they regularly attend church, read their Bible, or perform certain religious actions. They may think they are okay because they come from a religious family and have a devoutly religious heritage. “No one will be declared righteous in his sight” by doing or having these things (3:20). Religious heritage or activity will save no one, for “Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin” (3:9) and “there is no one righteous, not even one” (3:10). Salvation comes only “through faith in Jesus Christ” (3:22).

Background:

Please ask for and read the information contained in the “**Basic Information for Leading the Unit of Study**”, found at the beginning of this Unit. Whoever downloaded this session for you should have that material for you as well.

The context of this passage (2:1-3:20) is vital to understand Paul’s thought flow. Paul’s builds upon what he has stated earlier. The gospel message is powerful enough to save *everyone* who believes, both Jew and Gentile (1:16). He finished the entire section with a restatement of that fact (3:21-22). Paul then wanted to establish that *everyone* needs to be saved from his or her sin. To do this, he discussed the wrath of God poured out upon a depraved pagan Gentile world that is “without excuse” and deserves God’s punishment (1:18-32). But what about religiously devout people like the Jews? Aren’t they God’s favourites? And won’t they be saved because of their religious activity? In this section Paul demonstrated that even the Jews “have no excuse” (2:1), are no better than the Gentiles (3:9), are “under sin” (3:9), and stand “accountable to God” (3:19). Salvation is only “by faith,” an option available to all (cf. 1:16).

Focusing on the Meaning:

“You Who Pass Judgment on Someone Else” (2:1-11)

Having just described the horribly decadent and sinful lifestyle of the pagan Gentile world (1:18-32), it would be easy for Paul’s audience to excuse themselves because they were not caught up in that kind of lifestyle. These people “**pass judgment on someone else,**” and are proud of their religious and virtuous lifestyles. However, these people, like the pagan Gentiles “**have no excuse**” before God. Their virtue and religiosity was merely a thin veneer covering a sinful heart “**because you who pass judgment do the same things**” (v. 1). It is possible to be lost and enslaved in sin and yet remain outwardly religious (cf. Luke 18:9-14). Such people feel better about themselves by pointing out the sinfulness in others.

“So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment?” (v. 3) These people were quick to condemn other sinners as deserving God’s judgment, yet were unwilling to condemn

themselves. This is hypocrisy to its core – holding others to one standard, yet judging oneself by a much lesser standard. Such hypocritical judges take advantage of **“the riches of his kindness, tolerance and patience”** (v. 4) by thinking that God's kindness gives them a license to sin continually. God's patience and kindness does not mean that God condones sin, but his kindness in withholding judgment is supposed to **“lead you toward repentance”** (v. 4; cf. Ezekiel 33:11; 2 Peter 3:9).

People are all too quick to praise God for his goodness and kindness, yet at the same time refuse to repent of their sins and follow in obedient trust. This reveals **“stubbornness”** and an **“unrepentant heart”** (v. 5). Instead of storing up God's blessings for the future, they **“are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath”** (v. 5). **“God will give to each person according to what he has done”** (v. 6). God's judgment is based upon what each person has done in his own life; it is not based upon the kind of lives that others have lived. People will stand before God and give an account of their own actions (cf. Psalm 62:12; Proverbs 24:12). Paul described the evidences of a life lived either according to faith (vv. 7, 10) or lived for self (vv. 8-9). Each will receive its due reward or punishment, whether Jew or Gentile (vv. 9, 10), **“for God does not show favouritism”** (v. 11).

“You Rely On the Law” (2:12-13, 17-24)

(vv. 12-13) People will be judged by the standard that they know. If they know the law of God, they will be judged by that standard; if they do not know God's law they will not be judged by the standard of God's law (vv. 12-13). People perish because of their sin, not because of their ignorance of God's law. God judges each person according to his/her deeds (v. 6) not according to the light he/she did not possess. Everyone's own obedience or disobedience to what God has revealed to him/her is the basis of his/her standing before God (v. 13).

(vv. 17-24) What good is the law then? Is there any distinct advantage knowing God's law as opposed to someone who has never heard God's requirements? Those who have a knowledge of God's word **“know his will”** (v. 18), not wondering what God expects or where one stands with him. Knowing God's revealed will means that a person is able to **“approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law”** (v. 18), that is, they have the ability to discern between right and wrong because they have been taught by God's word. As such, a person who knows God's will has the ability to teach others in the right way to go (v. 20). These are indeed great advantages. However, such knowledge holds a person to an even greater judgment (cf. James 3:1), because knowing God's will demands obedience with no possible plea of ignorance (vv. 21-23).

Simply having God's law is no guarantee for salvation, for obedience is God's standard for judgment. When people live lives of disobedience to his revealed word to them, others will see the kinds of lives they lead and will want to have nothing to do with the God that they supposedly serve. **“God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you”** (v. 24). What a haunting indictment! People who do not fear God

see the poor example set by God's people and have even less desire to worship the God of salvation. God's people are driving them away!

"A Jew Who Is One Outwardly" (2:25-29)

"Circumcision," the removal of the male foreskin, was God's sign and seal of his covenant with the Jews (Genesis 17:9-14). It demonstrated a permanent bond that God had with his chosen people. However, many Jews regarded this highly significant religious action as some sort of guarantee for salvation, like a magical charm that once and for all sealed their relationship with God. They believed that being circumcised meant that obedience to God was no longer required, but Paul stated that this was far from being the case (cf. Galatians 5:3). Circumcision only **"has value if you observe the law,"** and if are disobedient to God's law, **"you have become as though you had not been circumcised"** (v. 25). Conversely, even if someone has not been physically circumcised but they obey God's law, God considers them **"as though they were circumcised"** (v. 26). Thus, neither knowing God's law nor going through religious ceremonies are the telltale evidence of being in a covenant relationship with God. God requires a life of faithful obedience.

Being a true **"Jew,"** that is being one of the chosen people of God, is not what takes place **"outwardly,"** on the outside of the body, but what has taken place **"inwardly."** True circumcision, God's sign and seal of permanent relationship, is **"circumcision of the heart,"** not of the flesh. It is the work of God's Spirit upon the heart, and it receives praise **"from God"** rather than the praise of men (vv. 28-29). People glorify outward, visible, superficial qualities, but God is concerned with what is deep and inward, evidences of the work of His Spirit upon the human heart (cf. 1 Samuel 16:7; Matthew 16:17).

"Are We Any Better?" (3:1-2, 9-20)

(vv. 1-2) As if his critics were in the room challenging his statements, Paul asked and answered their questions. **"What advantage, then, is there in being a Jew, or what value is there in circumcision?"** (v. 1). Does being the chosen people of God have any advantages at all? Absolutely, in the first place, **"they have been entrusted with the very words of God"** (v. 2; cf. 2:17-20). This is not an advantage that leads to salvation, but rather it is an advantage that leads to greater responsibility. The Jews had been given the Old Testament scriptures, a privilege given to no other nation (cf. Deuteronomy 4:8). With the knowledge of God's word given to them, they were now responsible to live according to its teachings (cf. Exodus 19:7-8).

(vv. 9-20) Does possessing God's word automatically make the Jews better people? **"Not at all!"** People who sin with or without the law still face God's judgment regardless (2:12). Simply having a heritage of faith in one's family is no guarantor of salvation. Each person is individually responsible before God. A heritage of faith is only an advantage for someone who personally appropriates that faith for themselves. **"Jews and Gentiles alike are all under sin"** (v. 9). Paul painted a picture of sin as a

huge weight crushing all people, Jews and Gentiles alike. Each person is a sinner who needs God's personal touch of salvation, a gift only received by personal faith.

Paul then used a string of Old Testament quotations to strengthen his point. Sin is universal to all people, for ***"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one"*** (vv. 10-12). His repeated statements of "no one," "not even one" stress the fact that no person stands in a right relationship with God on their own merits. Stated positively, "all" people have turned away from God, and "together" they have destroyed their own lives. Paul then used Old Testament quotes to describe how sin has affected every part of our bodies (***"throats," "tongues," "lips," "mouths," "feet,"*** and ***"eyes"***) -- a list he never intended to be exhaustive but to illustrate his point. God gave us these body parts in order to glorify him, but instead we use them to rebel against God and destroy people made in his image. As such, people in their sin have ***"no fear of God before their eyes"*** (v.18).

God delivers his case against sinful humanity, ***"so that every mouth may be silenced"*** (v. 19) like a defendant in court when confronted with the evidence has no valid defence to offer. Every person is guilty before him, and ***"the whole world [is] held accountable to God"*** (v. 19). ***"Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law"*** (v. 20), because the law declares that all people are guilty in God's sight (v. 19). ***"Rather, through the law we become conscious of sin"*** (v. 20). The purpose of the law was never to save anyone but to reveal their true standing before a holy God.

Your Goal as the Leader of this Bible Study:

It is God's law that reveals to us our sin, but it can never offer forgiveness of that sin. It reveals to us what we truly deserve (God's judgment); to make us desperately ready to receive what we could never deserve (God's mercy). As you teach this passage, ensure that you keep before the group the fact that, because we cannot be saved by obeying religious laws, rules, and regulations, God provided the perfect way to Him – through His Son, Jesus Christ.

For Personal Reflection:

In light of what I have studied in this passage of God's word:

1. What am I to believe?

2. What personal experience does this lesson bring to mind?

3. What does God want me to do this week to apply this Scripture passage to my life?

Bible Study Plan (Suggested time: 35 minutes)

“Why Being Religious Is Not Enough”

Regroup the church after the Gathering Time and break by singing a chorus that young children can relate to—or another praise chorus if your congregation does not have children. Children who go to their own Bible teaching session should stay with the group until after this song. Have the preschoolers and children accompany the hymn with rhythm sticks, maracas, bells, etc.

Begin by helping the group locate the Focal Text in their Bibles. Also, share with them the Main Idea to be learned from the Scriptures, and the Questions to be Explored by the group.

Focal Text

Romans 2:1-13, 17-29; 3:1-2, 9-20

Background Text

Romans 2:1-3:20

Main Idea

No matter how religious or “good” a person may be, no one may come to God in any way other than through faith.

Question to Explore

“In what things do ‘good’ people trust instead of trusting in God?”

Teaching Aim

To lead participants to explain why human qualifications, even goodness or religious outlook, do not result in salvation.

Connect with Life:

As the group gathers, ask them, “If you were to die tonight and God asked you, ‘Why should I let you into heaven?’ what would you say to him?” Let several in the group respond. If necessary, ask them, “What would most non-Christians say to answer that question?”

State: “We’ve already seen in Romans that salvation comes only by faith in Jesus (1:16-17). Today we will look at some of the inadequate responses people give for why they think they are already saved.”

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Guide the Study:

Be prepared to give an overview of the background for this passage taken from the teacher preparation material. Stress the fact Paul wants to demonstrate that all people are sinful and are in need of a Saviour. State, "Let's see what things these 'good' people trust instead of trusting in God."

Some people trust that others are more sinful (2:1-11).

Have the group glance back at 1:18-32 and re-familiarize themselves with Paul's description of pagan Gentile society.

Then have someone read vv. 1-11. Ask: "According to the beginning of verse 1, what were these 'good' people willing to do about those pagan sinners?" (pass judgment them)

Ask: "Why were they willing to do that?" (they felt that they were better than others) "According to the end of verse 1, did these people have any room to judge others?" (no, they were guilty also)

"Is it common that people would try to feel good about themselves by looking at the sin in others' lives?"

Ask: "According to verse 4, how had the people read God's kindness, tolerance, and patience of them?" (that God was condoning their sin) "According to that verse, what is God's actual intention?" (to bring them to repentance)

Ask: "According to verse 6, what is God's criteria for judging someone's life?" (what they have done)

Ask: "Is it ever a good excuse before God to state that at least you are not as bad as other people?" (no, you still fail to meet the standard)

Some people trust in their Bible knowledge (2:12-13, 17-24).

Have someone read vv. 12-13.

Ask: "What have these listeners heard that others have not?" (the Law) "Will simply knowing God's Law save them?" (no, people must also obey it fully)

Have someone read vv. 17-20.

Ask: "Then what benefit is there to knowing what the Bible says?" (know his will, approve of what is superior, instructed by the law, able to teach others)

Then read vv. 21-24 and ask: "Did simply knowing what the Bible says automatically keep these listeners from sin?"

Ask: In what ways do people today simply hear God's word and not let it affect their lives?" Read v. 24 again. Ask: "Why is verse 24 such a horrible indictment on God's people? What does that mean about God's people live their lives today?"

Some people trust in their religious activities (2:25-29).

Read vv.25-29 and be prepared to give any necessary background information on the Jewish practice of circumcision. Explain that it was a sacred religious ceremony ordained by God as a sign of his covenant with the Jews.

Ask: "Did circumcision in itself bring someone in a right relationship with God?" (No)

Ask: "What other religious activities might people trust to save them?" (church attendance, baptism, Lord's Supper, etc.)

Some people trust in their religious heritage (3:1-2, 9-20).

Read 3:1-2, and ask: "What advantage did the Jews have over the Gentiles?"

Did that advantage save them or make them more accountable?"

Read v. 9 and ask: "Did the advantage of having God's word make the Jews better people? Why or why not?" (Both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin)

Ask: "Can anyone trust their nationality, ethnicity, or family heritage to save them from God's judgment?" (No)

As you read vv. 10-12, ask them to point out the phrases that show how many people are righteous in God's eyes (note Paul's repeated emphasis)

Ask: "What point is Paul trying to make?" (all people are sinful).

Have someone read vv. 13-18, and have the group list the body parts Paul mentions.

Ask: "What is Paul's point?" (sin has affected our entire bodies).

Read vv. 19-20.

Ask: "According to verse 19, how many people are accountable to God for their sin?" (the whole world)

Ask: “According to verse 20, will anyone ever be able to live a good enough life to be declared innocent in God’s eyes? Then what good is God’s law then?” (it shows us our sin)

State that many people today ask a very popular question, “Why do bad things happen to good people?”

Ask: According to our passage today, what is the false assumption made in that question? (that there are any “good people”)

Say: “Let’s review some of the things in this passage that people trust will make them look good in God’s sight.” (other people’s sinfulness, Bible knowledge, religious activity, religious heritage)

Ask: “Do any of those save someone? What then our only hope?” (God’s grace and mercy)

Encourage Application:

If you have two or more youth, this is the time to give them the **Youth!!! Take Ten** page and allow them to go away from the adults and apply the lesson by and for themselves.

Have the group bring their own applications from this passage by asking them the following questions. *“In light of what we have learned today from God’s word,*

- ✓ What am I supposed to believe?
- ✓ What am I supposed to do?
- ✓ Is there a promise I need to claim?
- ✓ Is there an example I need to follow? Or avoid?”

Take a five minute break to separate the Bible Study and Worship Time. Children may need to use the washroom again before worship.

Youth!!! Take Ten

Bible Study Application for Youth

You may wish to move away from the adults for the final five to ten minutes of the Bible study and help each other as youth to apply the lesson to your own needs.

“Why Being Religious Is Not Enough” **Romans 2:1-3:20**

A youth will lead the following activity and comments. No adults need to be present. If possible, teens should take turns in leading the application time.

Discuss this comment briefly among yourselves:

Many young people go through a period of time in which they see the failures of older people and wonder if the Christian message is what they want to follow the rest of their lives. They may point to “hypocrites” in the church as a good reason for not following Christ’s teaching.

Now ask each other the following questions:

1. Are you personally disappointed with the examples of failures among Christian adults?
2. Have such failures affected your own Christian commitment?
3. Should the failures of others affect your own commitment to Christ? Why or why not?
4. Finally, ask yourselves, “How would you help a friend deal with questions and doubts such as these?”

Worship Time (Suggested time: 30 minutes)***“Why Being Religious Is Not Enough”*****Romans 2:1-3:20****Beginning the Service:**

Sing some or all of the following:

“The Longer I Serve Him” *Hymns for the Family of God*, #623

“Turn Your Eyes upon Jesus” *Hymns for the Family of God*, #621

“O How He Love You and Me” *Hymns for the Family of God*, #622

Offering:

We meet today with friends to worship you. We thank you for the blessings of this week – the food we ate, the shelter we enjoyed, the work we were able to do, the good times we shared with others. For some within our group and for millions around the world, this has been a difficult week. We pray for them your comfort and your peace. Accept our offering today and teach us to give with grateful hearts. Amen

Praying for the World:

The Dongxiang of China speak a language that is not formally taught anywhere in the world and has no written script. Therefore, translating the Bible into the language of the people is impossible. Some Dongxiang learn Mandarin Chinese or Arabic, but there is only a 12 per cent literacy rate so any attempt at written evangelistic tools is impossible. Pray for effective means of communicating the gospel to the Dongxiang of China.

Sharing Guide:

This sharing guide is written to assist the person who directs the worship time to reemphasize the teaching for the day and help guide the congregation to respond to God’s call and will for their lives in regard to the scripture studied. The leader may choose to follow the guide closely. Or, he or she may wish to only use it to give direction and a concept for preparing an original message. The leader is free to choose other ways to communicate and share the concepts presented here.

Righteousness through Faith

Introduction:

As a young adult many miles from home and worshipping in a different culture and language, this writer would often picture the simple building and worship of the church where she spent her teen years. Routine was a reality in that little church and it sometimes led to boredom. But it also led to stability. Many miles from home, the writer could picture just who might be doing what on a given Sunday morning in that church. These faithful servants of God never gave reason to be accused of hypocrisy or sham. Their faith was personal and real and growing.

A song sung in those days was written by William J. Gaither and was called ***“The Longer I Serve Him”***. It was beautifully sung in Spanish by a handsome, vibrant young Mexican man and it could not have been more beautiful. Later, however, the same song was sung by one of those godly people in the little church mentioned earlier. His voice was no longer strong; he had shrunk in height over the years. But the words of the song, “The longer I serve Him the sweeter He grows” was a testimony of a long life lived discovering the truth of those words.

This difficult passage in Romans 2 and 3 has many sharp reminders for us as Christians.

1. We are not to be judgmental.

Romans 2:1 says ***“You therefore have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.”*** This verse is difficult for us in light of Romans 1:32 which speaks of those who know God’s righteous decree yet continue to sin and continue to approve of others who sin.

How do we find that delicate balance between teaching those for whom we have responsibility – our own children, other children and teens of the church, neighbours who watch our lives – that certain things are evil in God’s sight without having a judgmental and critical attitude.

At a youth social a game was played which involved identifying phrases from movies. This youth sponsor was out before the game had hardly begun. But a few of the youth seemed to have incredible knowledge of every movie that was introduced. Such knowledge meant that they had watched the movie many times. It was evident to even the “out-of-the-loop” youth leader that many of these movies contained violent and inappropriate material. Yet they had been watched over and over, probably in their own home, by vulnerable teens. How sad that the winner of the game was a pastor’s son. It was easy to feel judgmental. Yet in many of our homes we watch less than best TV programs and videos.

The attitude of judgment that seems to be condemned in this passage is clarified in later verses. ***“So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God’s judgment? Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, tolerance, and patience, not realizing that God’s kindness leads you toward repentance.”*** (Romans 2:3-4).

Two things are important here. First, we are not to judge others especially if we do the same things. That may be easier than the second. We are not to judge others. By judging, we fail to recognize that God’s kindness, tolerance and patience has been given to us. Godly teaching by parents and faithful and true role models in our lives are all evidence of God’s kindness, tolerance, and patience with us. We cannot judge others because we have been given so much that makes it possible for us to choose a godly path. Jesus made a strong statement about this in Luke 12: 48 ***“From everyone who has been given much, much is demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked.”***

2. *“There is glory, honour and peace for everyone who does good: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.”* (Romans 2:10)

Again a tension is expressed for us. Salvation comes by faith alone. Yet glory, honour and peace is related to the living out of the commands of the law.

Moral developmentalists trace the movement of moral thinking from the fear of punishment and desire for reward to the childish view of good as an exchange of favours – a “tit for tat” kind of relationship. Later, children and adolescents do good to win favour with their teacher, their parents, or their friends. Sometimes, they do bad to win that same favour. A mature person is aware that laws exist for the good of the community. One person breaking a law has ripple effects. In order for a lawful society to exist, each citizen must obey the laws. But beyond the mere keeping of the law because it is an expectation of society is the internalization of the principles of the law. One is honest, not because there is a law which says one must be honest, but because one has an internal value system which causes him/her to want to be honest. Paul is expressing this concept in Romans 2:26 when he says ***“if those who are not circumcised keep the law’s requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker”***.

In v. 29 Paul continues ***“No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly, and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.”*** It is true that Paul is speaking here to the Jewish people who had come to feel that their laws and the keeping of those laws were essential and **all** that was essential for the favour of God. Paul is strongly disagreeing. He maintains that true goodness – true mature morality – comes as the inner code dictates the outer behaviour. We are good, not because there is a law which makes us good, but because an inner value makes us desire to be good.

And the result of this desire to do good and be good is glory, honour and peace. Glory is that which pleases God – it is not glory for self, but for God. As the elderly Christian sang, “The longer I serve Him, the sweeter it grows”, listeners were not called to glorify the man, but the God of the Universe who had walked beside this humble servant of God. Honour was given to God and peace was the daily portion of one whose life had not always been easy and who would eventually die a painful death from cancer. Yet his faithful service to his Saviour brought glory, honour, and peace.

Call to Commitment:

Paul continues in the Romans passage to discuss the fact that there is no one righteous by his or her own acts.

Romans 3:21-24 says that, now, because of Jesus, ***“...a righteousness from God, apart from law, has been made known; to which the Law and the Prophets testify. This righteousness from God comes through faith in Jesus Christ to all who believe. There is no difference, for all have sinned and come short of the glory of God and are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus.”***

These verses cause us to review the two main points that have been discussed. First, we are not to be judgmental for ***“all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”*** Secondly, we are to live in anticipation of a life full of honour, glory, and peace because we have been justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus. It is that life-giving grace which provides for us all the honour and glory we shall ever need. It is that promise of peace that enables us to face the daily struggles of life.

Concluding the Service:

Ask that each participant think of critical judgements he or she may have made in the last week. Help the children who may be present to understand what it means to be critical of others. Prayerfully lead the group to silently present these to the Lord and ask for forgiveness. Pray that in the coming week we may make deliberate choices to crush unfair and unnecessary criticism of others in our hearts and minds.

Focus now on a peaceful scene in your mind. It may be a mountain trail with summer wildflowers; the memory of a beautiful sunset; the seaside and the peace of digging for seashells; a long ride on your favourite horse; or gathering produce from your garden. Ask the Lord to help you hold the peace of that memory in your mind and heart when temptation to judge another comes your way this week.

(Consider singing **“When I Survey the Wondrous Cross”** if time allows).

To be read by a person during the Gathering Time:

**My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:
And I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish.
My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all;
and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand.**

John 10:27-29 – King James Version

Pray: Thank you, Lord, for the sweet assurance that once we have made a commitment to follow you, that you will yourself protect us from harm forever. Amen.