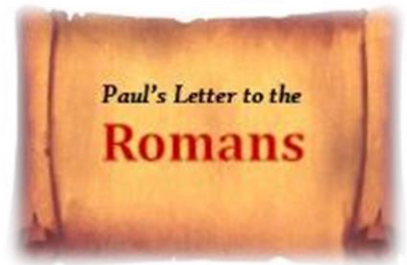


He was a guy you wouldn't want to run across in the first century, his name was Saul. And if he would run across you as a Christ follower he felt the best thing to do was exterminate you... until one day this guy who was considered among the religious elite at that time ran into an experience with Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. And from that moment on he had such an experience with Jesus and he recognized that He was who He said He was and he wanted to make sure everyone knew the feeling that he had, the forgiveness that he had, the love that he had. That the love of God that had come upon him as a result of that was unlike anything that he had ever experienced before and he wanted that word to get out.



And God changes his name from Saul to Paul and he goes out, he goes all over the then-known world trying to share the Gospel. He's constantly thinking of the next place further out that he can get to to share the Gospel. And when he would share the Gospel other people would catch this amazing forgiveness that he would have and they'd say, "We want that, too," and they would respond to Jesus. And then they would start meeting in little groups of people, just like Pastor Mike shared is happening in Ngalagne [Senegal], and they'd meet in these little groups of people and pretty soon more and more people would see that and say, "I want to be a part of that," and pretty soon they had a church. And then the Apostle Paul would leave there and then later on he'd write a letter to them sharing with them some more things that they need to know.

But there's this one church, the church in Rome, he wasn't the one that founded it. And in fact, he had never even been there but he heard about them, he heard that this was a group of Christ followers fabulously in love with Jesus, and because of their passion for Jesus the word had gotten out about how much they loved Jesus. And so he writes to them and says, "Hey, listen, you guys rock because you're telling everyone you know about the wonderful Savior that we have." And he said, "I wish like crazy I could get to you. I've been actually trying to come to you for a really long time but have been kept from doing so." He says, "If I were able to come, I would just sit down with you and I would tell you my story. I would tell you about my faith in Jesus. I would tell you about that experience. I would tell you the difference of the feelings inside of me, moving from a place of being a religious person to a person that has Jesus in my life. And I want to talk to you because I hear you have that, too, and I want to share it back and forth with you." And there he talks about the Gospel. He says, "I want to share the Gospel to you, to those of you who have by faith believed in Jesus Christ."

Well, all that was exciting and great and then he launches into a conversation. It's taken us three weeks, today will be the third week of the conversation he launches into. And it sort of reminds me of what it was like when you'd see the teacher walk into class when you were in fifth grade and you could tell everything was not okay. Do you remember that? Remember that look that they get on their face and they'd stand in front of the class and they'd say, "Be quiet! There's something I need to tell you." And then they would tell you about, you know, maybe the people hadn't been studying right, someone's goofing off between classes, or someone stole something, or who knows what and all of us sat there and even if you'd done nothing wrong you were feeling super guilty. Do you remember those days? It feels like yuck right now. Right? It's like, "Uh, I don't want to remember that feeling."



Maybe you had that same experience at work recently where everyone's brought into the conference room and then you were told hey, you know, this isn't happening and this isn't happening and we haven't hit these deadlines and we haven't hit these quotas and it's because you haven't and you haven't and you

haven't. And you're sitting there like, "I did," but down deep in because you're the one that did you're like, "Okay, I'll work harder. I'll work harder. I think I could do a little bit more. I think I can come in a little earlier and stay a little bit later, and I think I can make a few more phone calls. I think I could do it." And yet you leave there just feeling awful.

It's sort of what Paul does to us in these three sections here. So the first week when we began to talk about it, the good news was as he talked to *them*. Ever get into these conversations, "Well, *they*—"? Well, that he's talking to "they" and that's the very word that he used in that section. And he said, "They," and when he was referring to they—I always ask when people say, "They're saying"—Who is they?—and he was referring to the heathen, the pagan. You know those people somewhere away from me, not me. And he says they had every reason to believe in God, and he explains that reason because when they looked out they saw all of creation, they saw the mountains and the skies and the moon and the stars and the sun, and they saw those vast vistas and the sea rolling in time after time. And they saw the power and he says, "By the way, you should be able to by just looking at all that know how powerful God is and how big God is and it should draw your attention to Him. It's the natural thing to do. God has made it so that when you look out there you go, "Whoa, there is a God."

And he says but those people, *they* said no, no there isn't. I don't believe there is. I don't hear Him. I don't see Him. He isn't. And they said, "I reject Him. I am my own god. I will do it my own way." And as a result he says they just went and jumped into every sin they could get into, went against God's plan for the best way to live, and they continued to spiral down until they finally got to the place where they were doing *thee* worst sins that they could possibly imagine or find themselves into and they were celebrating them. They were shouting them out. They were proud of themselves for doing it.

Well, the readers are reading this letter that they're getting from Paul and they say, "Whew! Yeah, they're bad." And then in the very next phrase then he says, "But you," and we go, "Is he talking to me?" And when he gets a little more personal here everyone's ears perk up, we thought we had slipped through the cracks here. And he says, "You," and then he defines that, "You moral people, you who say I'm a pretty good person." It's like most of the people we run into in our world today, "I'm pretty good. I do things right. I treat people well. I live by the golden rule," they say. "I believe in God." He says, "You—wait a minute, wait a minute—as good as you think you are, you do not live up to the holy righteous standard of God which is perfection. And so as great as you think you are and you judge people, look down on other people because they're not where they should be." He says, "Listen, you're just as bad." And he says, "Just because you call yourself moral you're not righteous as God would call you righteous, holy and perfect by His standard." And he says, "You, too, are guilty."

So now they are guilty and now you are guilty and a whole bunch of us go, "Whew! Good news, but I'm here this morning. I get all that. I get that, you know, the pagan and I get the whole morality thing, but thankfully I'm among the religious. I'm here." And when we get to verse 17 of chapter 2 the Apostle Paul just wipes out the rest of the people listening on and he speaks to the religious people. So he started out with the pagan, we get to the moral people; pagans are guilty, the moral people are guilty, and now he gets to the religious people and he says, "You religious people, you are guilty, too."



You get asked the question often, "What religion are you?" Maybe we're even to a place where that question doesn't even get asked anymore, but maybe if you said to someone, "I go to church. I have to go to church tomorrow," their question might be, "What religion are you?" Maybe if we were to go

around this room and ask that question we'd get a lot of different answers. Now some of you maybe are like, "I don't know what to say. I mean, CF Downingtown? I'm not quite sure what that is. That's sort of weird." Some of you would say well, you come from a religious heritage and a position of something in the past and you still actually claim that. That's marked on your Facebook page under religion and you still just sort of call that out. Or maybe some of you are like, "I don't even know what I'd answer to that question."

I talk to people all the time who say to me, "I hate religion. Religion's bad. Religion's done a lot of bad things, so I have no interest in what *you* have to bring to me." What would you say to that? Well, the Apostle Paul, when he's writing to the church at Rome, has a lot to say about that because a lot of them were stuck on their religious place. And what he's going to tell us over and over through this section is here are the problems with religion. And if you're in a place where you're trusting in religion, here's what every religion trusts in: Every religion trusts in that what it is that I do gets me to God. Every religion tries to *earn* their way to God. And the Apostle Paul is going to say at the end of this, "Yeah, yeah that doesn't work either. And if that's how you're getting there, you're gonna be found guilty also." And he says, "No."

**RELIGION IS ABOUT EARNING  
YOUR WAY TO GOD**

But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

**- Romans 2:17-19**

So if you have your Bibles I would love for you to open them up. I use the English Standard translation of the Bible. You don't have to use that one, just some people ask me from time to time, "Your words sound different than mine," so feel free to use that one. We have Bibles that we give to you that are in the back on the tables back there, feel free to take one. If you know someone that needs one, take one and give it to them, we would love for them to have a Bible. If you're using your phone, that's awesome. They are great apps on there with your Bible on it. Our hope is that you're following along. Now if you're the type that it doesn't help you in the slightest to be staring down at your Bible, that's fine. I will communicate it in such a way that you can hear it. For me, it helps for me to look within the text and to just sort of begin to see the flow and the thought and even just put a few notes in there, underline a few words, because it helps me later on when I read through this again to remember it and understand it.

So if you have your Bible chapter 2 verse 17, and it looks like I'm gonna need my glasses. Here's what he says:

*<sup>17</sup> But if you call yourself a Jew and rely on the law and boast in God <sup>18</sup> and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law;*

**~ ROMANS 2:17-18**

By the way, the first opening thought of this reading is yeah, that sounds pretty good. Here's what I want you to hear this morning is: Religion is what happens when we take Jesus out of the equation. Remember I told you that religion is always all about earning? Religion is always about doing and what

you have done. So religion is always what happens when you take Jesus out of the equation. And so the Apostle Paul is writing to a group of people who are depending on religion, their religious heritage.

I heard this a long time ago, it's goofy, I didn't even say it right first hour so we'll see if I can say it right this hour, but I think it'll get the message across: Going to church doesn't make you a Christian any more than going to McDonald's makes you a hamburger. [Laughter] The Apostle Paul is speaking to a group of people who have said because I am *this*, because I am *here* this morning, because I come from this heritage, Grandma and Grandpa were this. And the Apostle Paul is going to say yeah, time out, slow down just a little bit. He says you are a group of people that and he speaks it here, "You rely on the law," and for them they would have said, "Yeah," and that is a good thing. For them they would equate that to the 613 laws of Moses that are found in the first five books of the Old Testament. What's



crazy about this, as a young Jewish child, age four, would have to start memorizing the first five books of the Old Testament. And I'm not saying Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy; I'm saying all the *words of* Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. They memorized it straight through that by the time they were 14 they could recite it and they could repeat it.

So it would be—when you have to memorize something you get it into your head, you get it into your psyche, it's a wonderful thing.

The Scripture says that the Word of God that we've hid in our heart, we do that so that we will not sin against Him.<sup>1</sup> But they had memorized it, but because they had memorized it they had spent so much time on that they became very proud of this thing called the law that they had memorized, that they had put so close inside of their heart. But in the midst of that, all of a sudden you start calculating those 613 laws and the problem with religion is it always becomes about earning. And when it becomes about earning you do that item and you check it off, and you do the next item and you check it off, and it becomes a systematized thing of checkboxes that pretty quickly turns into competition with each other, comparison with each other, to a place that there is this recognition that I am somehow morally superior to you, and I am good and God accepts me for who I am. Thus, religion always is about earning your way to God and benchmarking with others.

And, you know, even though every week we step in here and say we are a people of The Book, the word Bible means book, we're a people of The Book and we read our Bible and I really, really, really hope you're reading your Bible every week, we can get to that same place of pride that because I have taken in a bunch of knowledge that God's looking at me going, "Alright, Lee, way to go! You're my kind of guy." And what Paul's gonna say here is that's the problem with religion, we create a new check box and if we can get it checked off then we think that we're all right with God. And what he's trying to do when he gets the heathen to a place where we understand the heathen's lost, and when he gets the moral person to a place where the moral person realizes he's lost, and when the religious person realizes they're lost, we go, "Now what?" He's setting us up all through the Bible to realize I can't live up this standard, to a place where we scream out, "I need a Savior!" He goes ok, yes, because I realize I can't do it on my own.

You talk about the law. If you were to talk to my kids and my wife they would tell you that I am a very slow driver, annoyingly so. I have plenty of people—some of you have done it, honking at me [Laughter] because I am in no hurry. I have cars just chafing to get around me because I am in



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<sup>1</sup> Your word I have hidden in my heart, That I might not sin against You.. ~ PSALM 119:11 (NKJV)

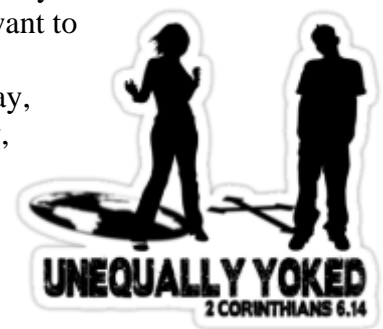


no hurry. I enjoy driving. I enjoy the experience. I very often don't even have the radio on because I love the sounds of the engine. If the weather is nice, I like dropping the windows, opening up the sunroof, and just taking in the full experience. I like looking across the gauges; I like to see where everything is. I just like taking in the experience of driving. I am not in a rush.

Now I gotta tell you, independently you can verify this with my kids, independently you can verify this with my wife, as a group they would be more than glad to give a recommendation that I am a slow driver out on the roads. I haven't gotten a speeding ticket since I was like 20 and it was like going 27 in a 25, and that's probably a lie. I was probably going 29 in a 25, but that's what I've rewritten the story to be. Anyhow, so this week my wife and I are on a four-lane highway, we're driving along and I say, "How fast do you think I'm driving?" And she's always sort of frustrated, "Let's go, go, go, faster, faster." "How fast do you think I'm driving?" She said, "Aw, 60-ish." I said, "I'm going 85." On her car that I was driving, when you go over the speed limit the speedometer goes red to tell you that you're in the red, that you're bad. So I let off the pedal, got down to 45 or whatever it was supposed to be, did the Grandpa thing like I always do. But here's what I've been noticing ever since, it's crazy. I drove her car a bunch this weekend and I'm always in the red. That is even considering the fact that there are people that will give a testimony that I am a slow driver and I'm still in the red. We think that we're following all the rules perfectly and even when there are people around us talking to us, whispering in our ear, "You're amazing. You do everything by the book. You're – I, I just don't know how you do what you do." What the Bible will tell us is you're in the red. And you go, "Wow."

He says to them, "You call yourself a Jew, you rely on the law," and listen to this: "and you boast in God." I would say for a moment, "Well, isn't that a good thing? Isn't it a good thing that we're boasting in God?" Just about every religious system that you can bring up has some sort of a god and that god has a name. Some of the religious systems will take you just one step further to get you to a place where you become a god. Unbelievable. So you take that god and you ask a person, "Hey, where do you stand spiritually?" Very often what you'll hear from a person is, "Well I believe in God." You go, whew, cool, good news. But all that means is I'm not an atheist. All that means is I'm not with that pagan in that first group that looked out there and said, "Yeah, I see it but no thank you." I believe in a god. Well, remember this, James says even the demons believe that there's a God and they shudder.<sup>2</sup>

Now this fits into our conversation that we have with a lot of people every day and I run into it often times when a couple comes in to get married because I want to know. The Bible says in 2nd Corinthians chapter 6 that we're not to be unequally yoked with an unbeliever.<sup>3</sup> And so I'll look at the girl and I'll say, "Hey, you know, tell me about where you're at spiritually." And she'll say, "Aw, man, I put my trust in Jesus. I love Jesus and He's first in my life." Now that rocks cuz that's what it takes; it takes putting our trust in Jesus. And then I'll turn to the guy and he'll say, "Oh, yeah, I believe in God." All of a sudden I see this relief look on her face like, "Whew. I was hoping he'd say that." And so the feeling is like, "I got the answer right and all is good."



You've had this situation before where maybe if you've asked your kid who's dating someone, and I mean, "Is the girl that you're dating a Christian?" and he'll say, "Well, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah. She believes in God." "Well, talk to me about that a little bit. Explain that to me a little bit." When the

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<sup>2</sup> *You believe that God is one; you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder! ~ JAMES 2:19*

<sup>3</sup> *Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers. For what partnership has righteousness with lawlessness? Or what fellowship has light with darkness? ~ 2 CORINTHIANS 6:14*

scripture says “unequally yoked with unbelievers” it pictures these two oxen, maybe one that's taller than the other, one that's stronger than another, and when you put them unequally yoked I read that what they'll do is they'll actually, when they're unequally yoked, they end up just going in circles with their wagon and they don't get anywhere. Well in that text they're in 2nd Corinthians 6 where it says don't be unequally yoked, it says for what fellowship does light have with darkness? And real quickly it says that unequally yoked-ness will put you in a situation where you have different desires, different goals, different objectives, different ways of living than that person that is not walking with God.

I just mention this to you because you will hear very often, “Oh, I believe in God” or “She believes in God,” or “Oh, yeah, yeah I believe in God,” and you need to drill down deeper on that. You need to verify, wait a minute, just believe in a god, you believe there's a god out there, or—and that's good, it's a good place to start. I always, when someone says that, I'm always right in ready to go because we believe in God. We believe in the one true God, but we have to go further than that because we have offended that one true God. And He sent His Son Jesus to die on the cross to forgive us of our sins and to offer us a relationship with God. And without that we're far from God. So just saying “I believe there's a God” is one of the risks of religion. Every religion has a god and real quick we're quick to go, “Oh, they must be the same then. It's all good.” No, it's not. And push back hard on that because you'll be led astray real quick by that.

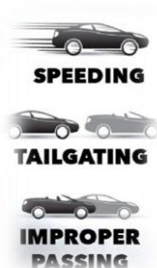
Now let me keep on reading here, verse 18:

*<sup>18</sup> and know his will and approve what is excellent, because you are instructed from the law; <sup>19</sup> and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, <sup>20</sup> an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—<sup>21</sup> you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself?*

~ ROMANS 2:18-21

Here's what he's saying: You don't walk the talk. And most of us have found ourselves in that situation more often than not. You see for them, they were Jewish by birth but not by lifestyle. We may be religious by birth but not by lifestyle. We may say, “Hey, we're part of Calvary by presence but not by lifestyle.” Imagine if you were to get one of those GoPros [digital action cameras/drones] and just put it on yourself and just live your week knowing that next Sunday there'd be someone standing at the door to review that GoPro for your week. Like, “Oooh, I think I'm busy next Sunday.” Whew! I mean, real quickly you get this wait a minute, what I say and what I do, what I said, how I live my life and what I say I do, what I intend to do, are two very different things. See, here's the deal, you're not doing well if you're not doing well spiritually, and God never blesses who we're pretending to be.

Look across this room right now and you go, “Man, everyone else here has it's so much better together.” Because in this place and all over this place we can come across as one thing, but when we get behind the wheel of our car, when we get behind the front door of our house, when we close our bedroom door, when we walk into the conference room, it's a totally different me. He says you don't walk the talk.



You know, to take my red speedometer illustration a little bit further, independently verified slow driver, it's like one of the few things I do in my life that are slow. Imagine right after the service today you guys get on the turnpike to go see grandma and you're feeling a little convicted by this slow driving talk and you're like, “Yeah, I better back it off, better keep the speedometer in white, not in red.” And you're just cruising along and you look in your rear-view mirror and you see a car coming from behind you, high beams on at ridiculous rates of speed, and you just snuggle up against

that right lane, as close to the right white line as close as you can, you move over, you let off on the pedal a little bit, and this car comes up just almost to your bumper and then *zoom!* out and then just around you. And as this car's coming around you look over and it's me. [Laughter] And you recognize that I said one thing and even everyone agreed, "Yep, he's a slow driver," but I did another thing. And it's the thing that convicts each one of us as we hear this is we're reminded—I can't make it to God through the checkboxes that I so desire to check off, and even when I think I've got it checked off I find something very different.



The last couple words of this paragraph says this:

*<sup>24</sup> For, as it is written, "The name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."*

~ ROMANS 2:24

God placed Israel at the center of the world at that time to be a light for Him; that when people looked at this group they'd say, "Wow! There is a God." And it was so attractive they said, "I want to find out who that God is." Have you ever been so stellar at something in your life that people are like, "I need to chat, how'd you do that?" God placed Israel there to bring glory to His Name, and the sad part was is they had rejected Him and so now it says here the name of God is blasphemed. And our hearts break despite how good we try to live, that we don't walk the talk and that as a result of that the name of God is blasphemed. People turn away and say, "I don't want to have anything to do with that."

A while ago—keep in mind I'm a slow driver, I'm relaxed—it was a summer day and I've got the windows down in the car, I've got the sunroof open, I don't have any music playing because I like to hear the roar of the engine. I pull into a grocery store parking lot. Now I'm kicked back, everything's fine, I am in no rush, I have nowhere to be, and all of a sudden the car in front of me stops. And the way the parking lot was laid out I couldn't get around the left, I couldn't get around the right, and the person gets out of the car and they have a conversation with someone there. I'm cool. I can live with this. I can understand other people. I'm a good Christian. Right? And then they gotta come around and open up the trunk and they're looking around and poking around in there doing something. And I'm looking



at my rearview mirror, maybe I can back up, and there's car behind me, and I just get more and more frustrated. And another car pulls up and talks to this lady and I finally have had enough and I just leaned onto my horn and honk it. I blast my horn and just then a lady pushing a cart walks by my car, looks in and goes, "Oh, hi Pastor." [Laughter] You've been there, right? I mean, I'm embarrassed by that.

But what Paul wants to get all of us who have tried really, really hard to be good and to be religious and to check the box, he's trying really, really hard to get us all to this place where we realize that we cannot do it on our own.

Now let me tell you what the next couple of verses begin to talk about so you can hear about this. When you get to verse 25 he begins to talk about circumcision. Circumcision was an external indicator of God's people that they were God's chosen people. It was something that means the removal of flesh. And when it's instituted, it's instituted in such a way as to have this spiritual significance of the reminder that we need to have the flesh removed. Flesh is always something very bad, and we think about the way we live we need to have that removed, and so there's this constant driving here to what is going on in our heart. But what ended up happening is they got to a place where it wasn't any longer about the

heart, but it was about these very specific behaviors and activities that you go through and you do and it becomes about these rituals, and so it becomes about religious rituals. So for them it was circumcision, and so they're very proud of that, box checked.

Let me think about it for a moment, for us it could be a number of things. Pastor Mike shared with us here a little bit ago, 24th of this month that we're gonna be doing baptism. I really, really, really, really want you to be baptized. If you put your faith and trust in Jesus, baptism is a way to shout out to the world what has gone on inside of us. It is a beautiful, amazing ritual, amazing symbol that in and of itself preaches the gospel by going under the water and connecting with Jesus in His death and His burial and then coming out of the water in representation of His resurrection. It paints and it pictures the Gospel message. And if you're a believer, you ought to do it, you need to do it, you have to do it, and you'll want to do it. But here's the problem with it; oftentimes people see us doing that here that we're doing it and it becomes one of those things, like, "Yep, I'll just do that." It's a checking off the box. I attend. ☒ I've gotten baptized. ☒ Oh, I was baptized as a baby. Oh, ☒ Oh, we dedicated our child. ☒ Religious rituals.



We do the same thing with religious symbols. We were talking about it. We pulled the cross down moving some things around for some different reasons, and I shared with the guys as they were taking it down that oftentimes my experience in churches that just freaks people out. They were looking at that cross going, "Oh, man, I don't know. It's just awesome staring at the cross and now it's not there anymore. Oh, my goodness. Something's going wrong at Calvary! Do they not believe in the cross anymore because the cross isn't hanging there anymore?" And the external religious symbol that is so incredibly powerful becomes something that we worship and we put it in its wrong place.

I went to my old church, we were in this tiny, little building in the middle of a neighborhood, and it had stained-glass windows around but they were really ugly and I wasn't even quite sure what it was that they were trying to portray and so I had them removed and it was like, man, I just denied the Bible by having them removed and all sorts of people were really, really upset about it. And I asked some questions about these "amazing" stained-glass windows and they said, "Yeah, a bunch of years ago we all decided we wanted to have stained-glass windows. So this one guy in our church, Chuck, he decided that he was going to make them at home in his oven. I'm like, "Yeah, that's what it looked like." [Laughter]

It was early '70s and Shrinky Dinks were in. Do you ever remember Shrinky Dinks? There's like all these little crystals that you'd put inside of a frame or a shape and then you put it in the oven and melt it and then it would look like a little stained-glass window. Well, he took a whole gazillion of these it and melted them one by one in the oven, and then he melded them together until he got the whole window. "And you took it down, Pastor Lee? When I looked into that I saw Jesus." I'm like, "I saw ugly colors." Paul says this is the problem with our religion, it becomes about externals.



When I was a kid growing up, the church that I grew up into was really big into – in the '70s – long hair was sinful. Everyone had to have short hair. And I remember my dad was on the softball team and we had to forfeit the game because the other team had long hair. And I remember a guy yelling over—I was just this little kid, I was so bummed the game was forfeited because we played the whole time—I



remember hearing this guy yell out to our team that had just forfeited because they had long hair, the guy yelling out to our team yelling, “I hope Jesus doesn't have long hair when He comes back!”

You see, we create these little religious rules and games that we run by. And here's what the Apostle Paul is trying to get us to a place of; as he walks us through he wants us to know that Jesus plus anything is nothing, but Jesus plus nothing is everything. It's not going to be about our religious practices. It's going to be about a relationship with Jesus. That's why when someone says, “What religion are you?”

**Religion is always  
about earning.**

**Religion focuses on  
what you do & don't do.**

**Jesus + Anything is  
Nothing**

I'm totally lost on that because I don't want to have anything to do with any religion. I don't want to be a part of that. I want to be a part of a relationship with Jesus Christ. The need you have is not a religion. I'm convinced you'll game it every time. I mean, we have example after example of the Jewish people looking at the

**The Gospel is about  
receiving God's grace.**

**The Gospel focuses on  
what Jesus has done.**

**Jesus + Nothing is  
Everything**

rules going, “Hey, this rule about the Sabbath, if I do this can I get around it?” And so we're always playing this game to get around it. You see religion is always about earning. The gospel is about receiving God's grace. And you'll never understand how much you need a Savior until you understand how hopelessly lost you are. Religion focuses on what you do and don't do; the Gospel focuses on what Jesus has done. When He took my sins and your sins on Himself and He offers forgiveness to us—not because of anything we've done, but everything that He has done. When you and I understand that we were hopelessly lost but rescued we will be forever indebted to the one who found us. And this is the Good News.

As hard as it has been to listen to God say to them, the pagan, “You're guilty”; as hard as it has been for us to listen to God say to the moral person, “You're guilty”; and as hard as it is for us to hear that the religious person is told, “You are guilty,” all of that had to be established and Paul masterfully establishes it so he can tell all of us you are guilty so that he can say here's the solution. And this is like ridiculously against everything that our world wants to scream out right now. Everywhere we go everyone has to be told you're wonderful, you're on amazing, you're awesome, you're perfect, here's your reward, here's your race, here's your plaque for the wall. And then Paul comes along and we have to sit here and listen to three weeks of messages going you're not amazing, you're not righteous, you're not godly, you're not moral, you're far away from God, you're separated from God. And we go, “Help! Help!” And he goes, “Good.”

Come back next week, chapters 3-10, as we keep on going on. Here what's great: It's good news! It's good news and we're going to keep on telling it. And it's not good news if you don't understand that I'm completely lost without Jesus and I need Him, and He is so absolutely irresistible.

And if you have never come to that place in your life where you want to receive that grace and that forgiveness and that love, don't let today pass without that. I would just invite you, put your trust in Him today. Just say to Him, “I get it now. I get it that I'm lost. I get it that You came to rescue me. I get it that You came to forgive me. I want what You're gonna give me.” So just, I mean, in your own words just invite Him in, call upon His Name. The Bible says if you'll call upon His Name you will be saved.<sup>4</sup> Trust in Jesus alone for your salvation. Have that relationship with Him.

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<sup>4</sup> For “everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.” ~ **ROMANS 10:13**

Let me pray for you. Take this moment if you're wanting to make that decision. Say, "Jesus, come into my life. I realize I'm a sinner. I realize I'm far away from You. I realize that even when I thought I was driving in the white, my speedometer was red. I get it, but I know that You came to forgive me of that and I realize I don't need to leave here discouraged, but I can leave here knowing that You love me, love me, love me so much that You rescued me. Just come into my life. I put my trust in You." The Scripture says that He will be faithful to do that very thing.<sup>5</sup> The Scripture says he who believes in Him will never be disappointed.<sup>6</sup>

*So Lord, thank you for all those who are reaching out and saying yes to You right now and I pray that they'll tell someone today, just like someone in the first service told me. I pray they'll find someone and they'll grow in their faith from this day on.*

*We love You and even as we give our offerings we don't do that to check off a box. We do know it's the best way to live, to give our gifts back to You and the first part of what we have earned back to You, and we know there's blessing in that, but we don't do that to check a religious box off or to somehow make You smile. You smile because of your Son Jesus, who we put all of our trust in. But use these gifts to minister like what Pastor Mike was saying with these people in Senegal, minister to more people like these children and these youth right now all over this building being administered to.*

*Thank you, Lord, for blessing this church with the ability to be a blessing to so many others, and we give all praise to the Name of Jesus in whose Name we pray. Amen.*

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<sup>5</sup> *If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. ~ 1 JOHN 1:9*

<sup>6</sup> *For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed." ~ ROMANS 10:11 (NASB)*

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