

**QUESTIONS FOR PERSONAL REFLECTION
& SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION
FOR JANUARY 29 THRU FEBRUARY 4, 2023**

—Here are some quotations that are intended to provoke some initial discussion about what's being presented in this study.

—“There are only two ways of salvation: by the law or by grace. If salvation is to happen by the law, perfect obedience is necessary. There can be no blemishes or shortcomings, for the law will never show mercy. It knows nothing of grace or forgiveness. It demands perfection, because whoever transgresses in one tiny detail transgresses the whole of God's law. ... It is vitally important to grasp exactly how much the law demands if we think we are going to be in a right relationship with God through law-keeping.” —**unknown**

—“The law cannot put us in a right standing with God. It knows how to do only one thing: condemn us. It is relentless and unforgiving in this task. It is not because the law itself is sinful or desires our condemnation. The law says, ‘Do this and live,’ but we cannot. The problem lies in us, not in the law. The law is good but we are sinful. In other words, the law is ‘weakened by the flesh’ (Romans 8:3). It is not the law that is at fault. The problem lies in our inability to do what the law demands. —**a selected quote from an anonymous speaker**

—“And wrapped in this risk and danger are God's embrace and promise to work all things (even evil ones) to the good of those who love him. When we read in the book of Romans, “And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to his purpose” (8:28), we are not to be Pollyanna about this. Many of the “things” we will face come with the razor edges of a fallen and broken world. You can't play poker with God's mercy—if you want the sweet mercy then you must also swallow the bitter mercy. And what is the difference between sweet and bitter? Only this: your critical perspective, your worldview. One of God's greatest gifts is the ability to see and appreciate the world from points of view foreign to your own, points of view that exceed your personal experience. That is what it means to me to grow in Christ—to exceed myself as I stretch to him.”

—**Rosaria Butterfield**

—“Grateful obedience and following God's guidelines should be the saved sinner's response to received grace. The rest of our lives are a way of saying, ‘Thank you.’” —**many faithful Bible pastors & Bible teachers**

—**Romans 5:6–9** ⁶ For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. ⁷ (For rarely will anyone die for a righteous person, though for a good person perhaps someone might possibly dare to die.) ⁸ But God demonstrates his own love for us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. ⁹ Much more then, because we have now been declared righteous by his blood, we will be saved through him from God's wrath.

—“The Gospel reveals to us that we are fundamentally flawed by our sin nature. It also gives us genuine hope and encouragement in the reality that God and God alone can fix this problem!” —**GAD**

—**It's always beneficial to carefully read and observe the details of what we're studying. Also please give some attention to what leads the section we're studying this week (2:11–16).**

—**Romans 2:11–29** ¹¹ For there is no partiality with God. ¹² For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; ¹³ for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. ¹⁴ For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, ¹⁵ in that *they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them,* ¹⁶ on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.

¹⁷ But if you bear the name “Jew” and rely upon the Law and boast in God, ¹⁸ and know His will and approve the things that are essential, being instructed out of the Law, ¹⁹ and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness, ²⁰ a corrector of the foolish, a teacher of the immature, having in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and of the truth, ²¹ **you, therefore, who teach another, do you not teach yourself? You who preach that one shall not steal, do you steal? 22 You who say that one should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery?** You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the Law, through your breaking the Law, do you dishonor God? ²⁴ For “the

name of God is blasphemed (dishonored) among the Gentiles because of you," just as it is written.

25 For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law; but if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision.

26 So if the uncircumcised man keeps the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision? 27 And he who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who though having the letter of the Law and circumcision are a transgressor of the Law?

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 which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

—After carefully observing this passage, what are some personal thoughts that come to your mind about how we can easily fall into the trap of thinking our personal acts of righteousness can outweigh our acts of disobedience in God's judgment? Also, is it possible for us to become too focused on a moral code? Why would/could that be a problem? What's the difference between maintaining a holy lifestyle that honors God and maintaining one that fails to honor Him?

—In the introduction section of the sermon notes there are four principles related to the Gospel message that we should never forget.

The GOSPEL is:

- 1) a **MEASURE** showing how far sin separates us from God;
- 2) a **MOTIVATION** for everyone to **TRUST** in Christ;
- 3) a **MESSAGE** about God's **GRACE** AND God's **WRATH**;
- 4) the **MEANS** of salvation from sin's penalty, power, & problem!

—Why is it important for us to understand these truths?

—How does God's Good News Message (including mercy, grace, love and wrath) motivate you to:

- share the Gospel with others?
- live your life regarding obedience toward God's Word?
- respond to the sinful behaviors that control our society?
- relate to your non-believing friends, neighbors, & co-workers?
- pray for our Church & for personal ministry opportunities?
- deal with life in a positive manner?
- trust in God's promises?

—Here are some questions related to the sermon notes that might promote or provoke discussion:

—1} Here are the life lessons we can apply to our lives, along with some questions to consider.

—SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS:

**—makes us very aware of the sins of others,
BUT typically we fail to see our own!**

—blinds us so we don't see our need for repentance.

—almost always leads to hypocrisy.

**—dishonors God because it's focused on me
& my accomplishments**

—What are some religious rituals (or regular activities) that can easily become meaningless repetition? How can we discern the difference between activities that are essential to being faithfully obedient to God and those that only lead to a self-righteous attitude? How can we maintain a proper attitude toward the Lord's Supper in order to keep it from being a "go-thru-the motions" ritual?

—How can we avoid becoming self-righteous?

—How can we cultivate authentic humility & avoid hypocrisy?

**—We won't ever appreciate how amazing God's grace is
without recognizing the reality of God's wrath!**

**—God will judge everyone on the basis of what we've done
with what has been revealed to us!**

—God's authority is always what matters!

**—Heart change comes when we totally trust in the Lord.
Proverbs 3:5–8**

—Why is it important for us to acknowledge God's authority over our lives, especially once we trust Christ as our Savior?

—Why do we often gravitate toward ritual rather than allowing God's Spirit to change and control our lives?

—2} Since the filling of the Spirit shouldn't merely be an emotional experience, how can we be certain that we're being controlled by God's Spirit?