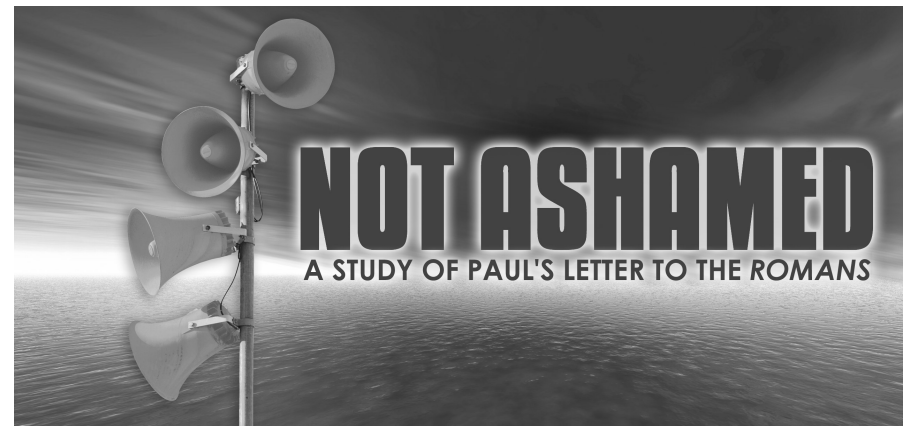


CONCLUSION – Owning The Gospel

2 Corinthians 5:19



PART 3: PRIDE & PREJUDICE

INTRODUCTION – New Ways, Old Ways, Ancient Ways

QUESTION: IS THE NEW TESTAMENT ANTI-SEMITIC?

Jesus (& Paul) opposed the Jewish religion of their day, not because it was Jewish, but because it had become _____ (ceremony over relationship, law over love).

THREE VIEWS OF THE JEWS & JESUS...

THE OLD VIEW: Jews were graceless legalists who are cursed by God for rejecting Jesus. This concept led many gentile “Christians” to persecute the Jews while believing they were doing God a favour. Many believe the Shoah (Holocaust), though not a direct result of this view, was indirectly aided by centuries of tolerating this attitude. The horror of the Holocaust finally made this view rightly unacceptable.

THE NEW VIEW: Jesus was a Jewish Rabbi and reformer calling Israel to renewal. He was basically on the same page as his fellow first-century Jews, especially the Pharisees. The New Testament was adjusted by early Christians to make him seem more opposed to the Law than he really was and to blame the Jews for his death. Jesus, as history records, was killed by the Romans, end of story.

THE ANCIENT VIEW: Being the Messiah, Jesus challenged Israel to radically rethink what Torah-observance should look like. His redefinition of true holiness (inside-out, love ethic fulfilling the Law ethic) was threatening to his contemporaries’ understanding of Law and covenant, appearing more like Torah rejection than Torah reorientation. As a desperate attempt to preserve Israel’s national wellbeing as well as religious purity, certain religious leaders of influence called for his death. Pilate, lacking backbone or conviction, did what would keep the peace and keep his job. Jesus was killed by a combination of the self-preserving manoeuvres of the religious leaders aided by the self-serving nature of the political leaders.

The New Testament writings are not anti-Semitic. They are anti-religion, anti-hypocrisy, and anti-separatist. They fight against anything that divides people into tribal groups.

HOME CHURCH QUESTIONS...

WARMING UP & REVIEW...

1. Discuss the implications of this quote by N.T. Wright: It still needs saying, though it remains difficult to say, that the creator of the world has no “favoured nation clause.” No one, no culture, no nation, no ethnic group can say “because we are x, y, or z, God will be gracious to us come what may.”
2. Use your notes to review this week’s message. As you go, talk about what challenged, perplexed, or encouraged you.

LOOK TO THE BOOK...

3. Review our key text (2:1-3:20).
 - a. What verse or thought stands out to you the most? Why?
 - b. Notice **2:17-24** and TAKE OUT #3. Paul is not arguing that all or even a majority of Jews committed these crimes, but some did, and that spoiled their witness. If writing to the church today, what current vices and past sins do you think Paul would need to include? How does this effect our ability to proclaim the Gospel in our context today?
 - c. What do you think Paul means by circumcision of the heart (2:29)? Also see **Deuteronomy 10:16; 30:6; Jeremiah 4:4; 9:25-26**. What is the real mark of God’s family?
 - d. See **2:25-29**. In what ways are religious rituals and symbols twisted today by Christians like circumcision was back then by Jews?
4. Read **Luke 18:9-14**. How many points of connection can you find between this parable of Jesus and our key text?

SO WHAT?...

5. Of the five “TAKE OUTS” from this week’s study, which lesson do you most need to apply to your own life? How so? Pray for each other regarding this.

HOMEWORK...

6. Read ahead. What questions does **3:21-4:25** raise for you?

Look To The Book

Romans 2:1-3:20

A QUICK SUMMARY...

1. Having established that Gentiles are accountable to God for their chosen sin (**1:18-32**), Paul now addressed pious moralizers in general (**2:1-16**) and religious Jews in particular (**2:17-3:20**).
2. Paul's style is Greek "diatribe" – a question and answer dialogue with an imaginary opponent (not an emotionally loaded rant, as we sometimes use the word today).
3. Paul continues to paint the problem to which further chapters respond with the solution. Remember when reading, this passage is the set-up for **3:21** and onward.
4. Rather than being touched and transformed by God's kindness, we have all abused his patience and grace, using it as an excuse to live selfishly (**2:4**).
5. Lack of repentance will lead to God's judgement, which will be on the basis of our ongoing lifestyle choices (**2:5-11**), as Jesus also taught (**John 5:29**), and our secret thoughts (**2:16**). This raises the question, Is that good news or bad news for you?
6. Possessing God's Law in any form (Torah or conscience) is not enough. It must be followed (**2:12-16**). Truth is not just to be known, but to be lived.
7. Note that, like Jesus (**Matthew 5**), Paul never structures his arguments for the New Covenant to say that Torah-keeping is not good or is now passé, but that by following Christ as the Spirit guides we are being Torah-observant in the best possible way.
8. Israel has failed to live up to her calling to be the light of the world (**2:17-24; Isaiah 42:6-7**), so God must now make a radical course-correction in human history.
9. God is widening the circle of his covenant people to include all faithful believers (**2:25-29**). True Jews then are those who follow God according to the Spirit (pneuma), not the letter (gramma) of the Law.
10. Shockingly, Paul goes so far as to say those who live according to the Spirit as opposed to the letter have the exclusive right to the name "Jew" (**2:28-29**).
11. Ethnic Jews do have one great advantage – they have been entrusted with the oracles of God, his very words (**3:1-2**). Their history and culture is the soil out of which grows God's Messiah and God's New Covenant people.
12. Unfortunately, the net result of having the Law is not salvation, but a reminder of our inability to live completely righteous lives (**3:20**). This is a problem needing an answer.

So What?

TAKE OUT #1:

The Gospel seems best expressed in the form of _____ rather than monologue. You don't have to preach (in fact, it may be better if you don't), but you do have to _____.

TAKE OUT #2:

We all sin and are, in some way, entrapped by its power (**3:9-18**). All judgemental impulses must _____ to this truth. Jesus didn't say to say to check to see if you have a log in your own eye (**Matthew 7:5**).

TAKE OUT #3:

History suggests that the Body of Christ has been at least as guilty as the Jews ever were of not accomplishing our commission (**Matthew 28:28-20**). This makes the rebukes of Paul to Israel remarkably _____ to the Church (**2:17-24**).

TAKE OUT #4:

There is no magic involved in the symbols God gives his people, whether circumcision (**2:25-27**), baptism, or the Lord's Supper. Doing these things are not the _____ to grace but the _____ of the grace received by faith.

TAKE OUT #5:

We must always approach our Jewish friends humbly, knowing that:

- a. their history and identity gives them a rich understanding of God's word that we can _____ from (**3:1-2**), and
- b. church history leaves us with much to _____ of in our relationship with Jews and Judaism.