

**INTRO**

Good that's go bad. General list (food, relationships)

Good spiritual things (list from text)

What happens when they go bad? How happen?

Happened in Paul's day. People of Word – but something gone wrong.

WE are people of word. Believe it. Teach it. Try to apply it in life. Could something like this go wrong with us? Yes

Paul diagnosis the problem – gives the remedy.

**PRAY**

Context

Rom1-3: establishes need for gospel and righteousness that only comes from gospel.

Ch1 – Paul first points to pagans (non Jews, non believers) who have exchanged the glory of God for idols and for a lie. Suppress truth of God – see no need for God in their life. Without the gospel - they are under wrath and eternal judgment of God.

Ch2:1-16 – “Moral person” “Good” person needs gospel as much as pagan.

Ch2:17-29 – Paul turns sites to “religious” person. Specifically the religious Jew. But could be anyone who considers themselves religious, follows religious system...

**People of the Word**

The Jews addressed here are like many: greatly valued their religion. Considered themselves to know more about spiritual/moral matters than anyone. TRUE. God chose them to give His law. People of the Word. They were God's covenant people as signified by circumcision. God had given the Jews great privilege & responsibility.

Romans 3:1-2 (ESV)

1 Then what advantage has the Jew? Or what is the value of circumcision?

2 Much in every way. To begin with, the Jews were entrusted with the oracles of God.

Problem – often when given great privilege and responsibility one can begin to rely on that privilege for entitlement.

See need in community, country. Enter politics to humbly serve. Elected to office – Relies on office as justification for special privilege, personal entitlement. Misuse of office. Result? Low approval ratings for politicians. Such bad name that... (Burgler won't rob politician Why? Professional courtesy)

Even though religious Jews given the law, given higher standards of living, Paul sets out to demonstrate that the gospel of Jesus Christ is as necessary for them as for the pagan.

Reliance on the Law (Word)

17 But if you call yourself a Jew (calling yourself one of God's people) and rely on the law and boast in God

18 and know his will and approve what is excellent(know what is right), because you are instructed from the law;

Reverse: Because you are instructed from the law you (say you) RELY ON THE LAW, and BOAST IN GOD, and KNOW HIS WILL, and APPROVE WHAT IS EXCELLENT.

4 good things .... 4 personal benefits/privileges when we are instructed by the Word of God. Then 4 ways God's Word can benefit others through us.

19 and if you are sure that you yourself are a guide to the blind, a light to those who are in darkness,

20 an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of children, having in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth—

Reverse... Because you have in God's Word the embodiment of knowledge and truth you perceive yourself to be 1) A GUIDE TO THE BLIND, 2) A LIGHT TO THOSE IN DARKNESS, 3) INSTRUCTOR OF THE FOOLISH 4)A TEACHER OF THE IMMATURE.

4 more good things. When a person is instructed by God's Word (has their world view shaped by God's Word.... Has their mind transformed by God's Word... has their life molded by God's Word... they become stewards of God's Word to others and are a blessing to help others know God and follow Him. This was why God chose Israel – gave them His Word (the Law) – to be a light to the nations....to show the world by example that you can rely on God's Word to be a lamp to feet/light to path, you can have confidence (boast in) the saving – sustaining power of God, you can know His will and know what God desires of you. These are all good things. So why is Paul calling the religious person out?

Appearances can be deceiving. RELY = TO REST. No action necessary. These religious Jews rested on the law like many today rest on the bible.

- Have 1 (more) in the home. Makes sure it is prominently displayed on coffee table.
- sometimes reads it.

- carries it with them to church. (tells everyone I'm walking with God)
- will say it is the Word of God.

Because of this, they feel that they please God. They rest upon the fact that they own a bible. By having the bible around, they feel they have God's approval and acceptance.

Like these Jews – we can have a bible around, know a few verses and have the appearance of something that looks to be true. But without allowing our lives to be transformed by the HS, through God's Word – where we are doers of the Word, not only hearers, this is false security.

Reggie Lewis was a basketball player for the Boston Celtics from 1987 to 1993. He had an average of 20.8 points a game and finished with a career average of 17.6 per contest. In 1992, During a Celtics practice game on July 27, 1993, Lewis died suddenly. He suffered sudden cardiac death and was only 27 years old.

Had hypertrophic cardiomyopathy, a structural heart defect. Knew how to play the game. Had technique but didn't know he had an inner structural heart defect.

The religious Jews had a structural heart defect: they relied on their righteousness and external religious appearance, therefore their confidence in acceptance before God was false for it was not based on the reality of their heart condition but assumptions they based in their pride.

We are so susceptible to this. We can be confident in things like attending church, being baptized... confident in our serving, giving, even in our biblical knowledge. But why did Jesus say the Pharisees, who knew scripture inside out, knew the truth, were the blind leading the blind? They didn't know God. Love God. They didn't have a heart for God. How important to nurture a heart for God. Without a heart for God we can know the truth but never find reason to apply it to our own lives.

Romans 2:21-24 (ESV)

21 you then who teach others, do you not teach yourself?

Implied answer – NO. Not practice what preach. Don't walk the talk.

You're a hypocrite. You teach others, but as Jesus remarked to the Pharisees – you are the blind leading the blind. "You do not teach yourselves" WHAT?

That the purpose of the LAW was to shine the light of God into their own life and show them how much they could never keep the law in their righteousness. The Law taught

them how much they needed God's righteousness. Righteousness of God is found where? (1:17) the gospel. Paul's point.

V21b While you preach against stealing, do you steal?

22 You who say that one must not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples?

I haven't done those things....

I suspect we would respond like Jews who read this might.... "I haven't done those things. I don't steal. I haven't committed adultery. I hate idols and haven't robbed any temples. In these examples: Paul speaking of Law in general, for if you break any part – you've broken all. However....

Stealing: Many ways we steal without knocking over a 7-11. Fudged on taxes. Cheated on a test. Downloaded copyrighted music or movies. Stolen someone's character through gossip. Confidence through harshness. Stealing GOD'S GLORY thru sin.

Adultery = unfaithfulness. One may not be physically unfaithful to their spouse – but Jesus said to have thoughts of desire for another is adultery.... And who among us has not committed spiritual adultery to God? Who has not at some time been unfaithful, in some way, to God?

"Robbing from temples" You say you hate idols, but do you lit = commit sacrilege – by robbing God of things committed to Him?

Who hasn't robbed God. (time, talents, treasure) Stewardship.

ILLST: TX. I was interim pastor. One guy verbal about giving. Challenged budget constantly. I recall monthly meetings (Baptist) debated about "grace giving" vs tithe.(didn't believe in tithe) Wanted to teach what the bible really said about giving. Never use envelop – giving was between him and the Lord. It would be great if he practiced grace giving, which for his income would have exceeded the tithe. Problem: in the 3 years I was worship pastor and the 1 year interim pastor he never gave one cent to the church. Financial sec & I only ones who knew this – but his hypocrisy dishonored God and destroyed his witness in her eyes.

Paul is saying that we can SAY we worship God and hate idols; yet we take what belongs to God—our commitment, our time, our energy, our tithes—and give it to

something else. We make something else more important than God; we make it an idol.

Jesus' indictment on the religious person....

Matthew 23:28 (ESV)

28 So you also outwardly appear righteous to others, but within you are full of hypocrisy and lawlessness.

In calling out the hypocritical religious person Paul saying – You've polluted the purpose of the Law and misrepresented God. you've placed your confidence in the fact that God gave YOU the law and not others – therefore you can live as you wish. You are relying on external appearances of faith rather than the inward change that comes only through the gospel. And the consequences are terrible because they don't only affect you but others, AND their opinion about God. In doing so – you have taken the good things of God and made them bad things in other's eyes.

23 You who boast in the law dishonor God by breaking the law.

Breaking the law = failing to live up to God's standards. This is sin. As believers – we have forgiveness for sin... but does this mean everytime we blow it we dishonor God? In a sense yes. But not in sense Paul is speaking of.

Honor equated with glory. When we honor God we give Him glory. When we dishonor him we deny Him glory. Rom 3:23 – when we sin we fall short of His glory. WE ALL DO. But Paul speaking dishonoring of God when we pridefully boast in the law...in our standing before God. ... when we use God's word in judgmental way instead of in loving way, instead as God's tool to see our shortcomings – we dishonor God before those whom we judge, try to teach, or those who simply observe our life. Just as Paul called out the “moral people” for hypocritical lifestyle – he's calling out all those who say they are people of the word – religious people. Because of hypocritical lifestyles all the good things you have, boast of, talk about become bad things in the minds of a watching world.

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

What an indictment – to cause all the good things of God ... including God himself... to become bad things in the minds of someone who has observed our hypocritical lifestyle. Paul is quoting Isaiah 52:5 where because of their sin God allowed them to be taken captive. As a result Isaiah 52:5 (ESV)

5 Now therefore what have I here,” declares the LORD, “seeing that my people are taken away for nothing? Their rulers wail,” declares the LORD, “and continually all the day my name is despised.

As a direct result of Israel’s sin God’s reputation was damaged. Same holds true for any of us who talk about God’s Word, set ourselves up as Christ followers, then judge people from God’s Word – and yet fail to live it out. Imagine what it would be like to stand before Jesus on judgment day and He says: You have misrepresented me, My love, my righteousness to others... and BECAUSE OF YOU... your neighbor reviled me/ blasphemed me and closed their heart to my gospel.

Westboro Baptist - example

We can think of famous examples of this: Who hasn’t heard of Westboro Baptist Church in Kansas. Known for disrupting funerals of fallen service men to gain media attention to their teaching that God hates gay people. I call them out by name #1-they need to be rebuked by name, #2 they are all over the media – and seek to be known. In BBC documentary, Shirley Phelps-Roper(part of famiy) agrees that the \$200,000 the church annually spends to fly to funerals to protest was money spent to spread "God's hate". Their hate not limited to gays. Also various religious groups. All because they are convinced they are people of the Word and are called to bring light into the darkness. How many people have been negatively affected for the Kingdom because of such an evil representation of who Christ is.

## CONCLUSION

God has given us the gospel to be reconciled to Him and thereby spread His glory throughout the world. He has given us His written Word (the bible) to help us fall more in love with Him. He has given us His living Word – Jesus as the ultimate example of what a life of faith looks like. Paul said in the gospel is a righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith.... That the righteous will live by faith. Our standing and acceptance before God is in Christ alone for He is our hope of glory. The world is watching us. They will see us mess up, fail. What they think of God is largely how they see us respond. We can act religious and judgmental – and possibly turn the good things of God into bad things in their eyes... or they can see us respond in brokenness and humility, where the only difference between us and them is that we have accepted Jesus’ offer of complete forgiveness and redemption. Then we win the right to share this good news with them...and God is glorified.