

Good News/Bad News
Romans 3:19-28 ZCC 3.15.15

Now we know that whatever things the law says, it speaks to those who are under the law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may be brought under the judgment of God. 20 Because by the works of the law, no flesh will be justified in his sight. For through the law comes the knowledge of sin. 21 But now apart from the law, a righteousness of God has been revealed, being testified by the law and the prophets; 22 even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all those who believe. For there is no distinction, 23 for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God; 24 being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus; 25 whom God sent to be an atoning sacrifice, through faith in his blood, for a demonstration of his righteousness through the passing over of prior sins, in God's forbearance; 26 to demonstrate his righteousness at this present time; that he might himself be just, and the justifier of him who has faith in Jesus. 27 Where then is the boasting? It is excluded. By what kind of law? Of works? No, but by a law of faith. 28 We maintain therefore that a man is justified by faith apart from the works of the law.*

So the doctor comes in and she says, "I have bad news and good news." The patient looks worried and says, "What's the bad news?" Doctor says, "Your operation will cost twice as much as we originally thought." So the patient says, "Oh no! and what's the good news?" Doctor: "I'll be able to afford a new Lexus."

There is a presidential election in Russia and the president's adviser rushes into the room. "I have bad news and good news." "What's the bad news?" "Your opponent got 51% of the vote." "What's the good news?" "You got 70% of the vote."

What does the word "Gospel" mean? [Good News] A few years ago someone sold bumper stickers that read, "Good News, America, God loves you." No doubt that is good news—and there is no "other side" to that. You might say that if God loves you there is no bad news.

As we come closer and closer to Easter, one thing I want us to think about and hear about is the work of Christ. What he did and why. He came to make a way back to God. Humans were not able to do that for themselves. God loves us and he sent the Son as a sacrifice for each of us.

Some time ago, I was reading an interview with an Olympic diver. Someone asked him how he prepared mentally just before a dive—considering the extreme pressure of the moment. He said that he goes out on the platform, pauses and gets his thoughts together and takes a deep breath—then he reminds himself that if he blows the dive, if he absolutely fails, his mother will still love him. The idea being that an Olympic dive is an important thing, but not the most important thing in the world.

For there is no distinction, for all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God;

That's the bad news.

This passage is often used to explain away salvation by works—the idea that being good gets you into heaven—and it works for that. We will look at that aspect in a minute.

The good news here is that, as Christians, we can look at those words and know that no matter what, God will love us. Deep down, I believe we want to live without sin—to get through the day without breaking God's law. We want to win that battle. It is an important battle and it is an important day. The Good news is that when we fail, God still loves us.

Tonto and the Lone Ranger are backed up against the wall of a box canyon. To the rear is a 500' rock wall. To the left is a 500' rock wall. To the right is—you guessed it—a 500' rock wall. In front of them are 500 blood-thirsty, angry Indians. Tonto turns to the Lone Ranger and says, “What you mean WE in big trouble PALEFACE?”

What this passage says is that when we fail we are not the Lone Ranger, we are not alone. We are in good company. Paul tells us that he is the greatest sinner. Peter failed over and over. So did Moses and Joshua and everyone else except Jesus the Christ. We will fail—and we will come up short over and over again.

The Good News is that God's love does not depend on our good works. In fact, there is double-barreled Good News. GETTING our salvation AND KEEPING our salvation does not depend on our ability to be good enough.

Just like that Olympic diver, we can climb up on that platform, take a deep breath, and let it out slowly—with the resolve to the very best possible—still knowing that if we fail, God will still love us—that God's love will still be sufficient to sustain us.

All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.

In a sense, we can say this is Good News as we struggle and fail as we live our lives. We are not alone in our struggle. We are not alone in our failures. God loves us anyway.

Good News, Christians, God loves you. Good News, America, God loves you. Good News, earth, God loves you. Good News to all creation—the universe and beyond. God loves you!

I have Good News and bad news.

If all have sinned, then no one is good enough. ALL have sinned and fallen short. That's Good News if you put the emphasis on ALL.

If some were able to be good enough, then the system of the law might have prevailed. If SOME were able to work hard enough and do well enough to get by—then those of us who fail wouldn't have an excuse.

It is in the ALL that we find the sending of the Son. It is in the ALL that we find the love of God put into a plan and that plan put into action.

It is in the ALL that we find Easter.

The bad news is that we have sinned and fallen short. The Good News is that God has made a way.

Do we want to spend eternity with God? Do we want to experience the glory of heaven? Do we want to miss the judgment where everyone will come up short?

The bad news is that the traditional approach—the secular approach, if you will—to getting into heaven will fail. “Well, I’m as good as those Christians down there at the local church...” Unfortunately, that statement is sometimes all too true—but as Romans 3:23 says, all have come up short—and we will continue to come up short.

Every Christian has failed and will continue to fail.

The bad news for non-Christians is that God isn’t going to measure them against our righteousness.

We can get too caught up comparing ourselves to others—looking at them and declaring ourselves to be as good or better than them. This may even be true. It may well be that you are better than everyone else sitting on your pew. We think we want to do a little “comparison shopping” and get weighted on a balance scale. The problem is that when it comes to the judgment, there will only be two people present—you and Jesus the Christ. NOW what do you think about getting into one side of that scale, opposite him?

Sometimes our problem is that we look around us and think that we might be good enough when we should be looking up to see if we are good enough.

No one gets to heaven on their own merit—no matter how much better than me or David or any of you they are. No matter how bad the rest of the world is, we will always come up short.

But, being God and being wise beyond human understanding—God had a plan. God knew that you and I were going to fail. God knew that we were going to be found wanting.

That failure is bad news. The plan is good news. In fact, it is THE Good News. The Good News is that God loved us so much that he made a way for us to get back to him.

We have created a gap between us and God—but he built a bridge so that we could return.

Good News, world, God loves you. God put feet on his love. Feet. Hands. Fingers and toes. He sent the Son.

Who can quote John 3:16? [*For God so loved the world that he sent his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.*]

How about Romans 5:8? [*But God commends his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.*]

Here is our bridge. God loved us and he sent his Son to be a bridge so that we might cross that gap we created and return to him.

That's the Good News. Y'all know that the word Gospel means just that—Good News. Someone has said that John 3:16 is the Gospel in a proverbial nut-shell.

The bad news is that there are still people out there trying to live under the old system—the system of the law.

Scripture says that no one will be justified under the law. No one will be good enough. If you are depending on your good-ness, the bad news is that it will not be enough. There are people all around the world who have bought into this legalism—trying to be good enough to scrape by at the judgment.

The ancient Egyptians believed that you averaged out your deeds—good and bad and that they canceled each other out. Some good deed might be worth 5 points and some bad deed might be worth the same 5 points. No problem. That canceled out and now you are even again. When you died, the good and bad were averaged or caused to cancel each other until you had the lowest possible number. Then your bad deeds were put in a balance scale against a feather. If your bad deeds weighed more than a feather, you lost your soul.

But if you did enough good, you were OK.

The bad news is that there are people all over Beavertown and all over the world—and even in the pews of our churches—who think that is the system God uses.

It isn't.

The bad news is that we can't possibly be good enough.

The Good News is that we don't have to.

Jesus took care of that.