

## **Romans 2:1-4**

### **The Goodness of God**

Page 2

*The Moral Person Thinks He's Perfectly Safe Spiritually*

I told you a few weeks ago about how I first got a hold of my wife's hand. You know, I tried to figure out a way to hold her hand. Finally we were climbing these mountains in northern California called the Trinity Alps. They're called that because they're sharp, jagged peaks, look like the Alps of Switzerland. The only difference is they're not quite as tall. But these gorgeous mountains, we were hiking and I had got a hold of her hand to help her walk, climb, we were hiking to the top of one of these. And they actually go to points, the mountains go to points, I kid you not. You know when you were kids you'd draw mountains with points and the teacher would say, 'No, mountains do not have points'? And I think we've even got one at home, it came off in my hand. [laughter] It did. The point came off right in my hand. I'll bring it in some week. It will illustrate something someday, sometime, somehow we'll work it in. But we were climbing these Alps, these Trinity Alps, and I decided 'Well, let's go, we'd better go back to camp now, and we were way up there, I mean the lake looked about this big from where we were. Ok? There was this big lake and it looked like a little tiny thing and we were way up high, and so we decided that we would go down. I thought, 'Well why go back the way we came up, that would be boring, let's go down a different way. And I'm not a seasoned rock climber, and I said, "This looks good", and there was this cleft in the mountain which went down like this, and sort of turned, and you couldn't see what was around the corner. And I said, "Come-on Leslie, let's go this way." And so we start scrunching our way down feet first we were going down and made that turn, and I didn't know what was there, and so I made the turn and my feet went for

something and there was nothing there--a shear drop for 800 feet, or 600 feet. Anyway, it was scary, and I said "I don't think we want to do this!" ('Stop!! I've got plans, I want to marry you someday.') (I hadn't told you that yet.) Anyway, she stopped and we had to climb back up and find a different way out. But that was scary. You see, I thought I was perfectly safe. I had no idea what a dangerous situation I was in. And that is where the "moral person" is. Not that the "morality" is dangerous, but thinking that you've got a good standing with God because you're a good person is all wrong, because God doesn't see you as being a good person [when you're not saved, covered by the blood of Jesus, Yeshua]. He sees the mistakes you make. They flavor everything. It's sort of like if I saw I've got a little skunk in my car. Is there such a thing as a "little" skunk? I mean, you know somebody smashed that skunk on the highway, and how many thousands of cars have run over it? And you accidentally got close to it. You didn't run over it. And you've got that smell in your car for the next 100 miles. What do you say, a little skunk juice goes a long way. And it's sort of like we're skunks. And everything we do smells. You can have a good skunk, I'm sure, but everything they do smells like a skunk. And that's the way it is with the human race. Everything we do smells of sin. And sure, you may be a "nice" human being, but still you are a "lost" human being. Sometimes people ask me the question, it comes actually very often, about once a week.

Somebody asks me, "Well Mark, why is it that I'm a good person and bad things happen to me?" And I guess it's an honest question. It's not always thought through, biblically, because another question that can be asked 'Why do good things happen to bad people?' I mean, I know some really well off rascals. Don't you? I know some pretty lousy, dirty dealing business men that are rolling in the dough right now. I know some pretty rotten people who don't have cancer. The other day I was thinking about this as I saw this old drunk, he must have been 65 or 70 years old, smoking his cigarettes, bottle there, you know, living on the streets. And I was thinking, 'Why does a man

like this live so long? And some dear precious brother who's never had a cigarette in his life, never ever had a drink of alcohol dies of cancer when he's 30. Why? I don't understand? You know, if good things happen because you're good, bad things happen because your bad.' I'm sorry, that's superstition. That's not reality, and that's not what the Bible teaches. Recently channel 21, the TBN Broadcasting station here, has had to go back on something they did about six months ago. You know John Abenzen, the guy that waves his hand over your offering and you'll get a lot of money back--this guy's supposed to be an expert in biblical finances. [It's guys like this that give Christianity a bad name!] He promised the viewers about six months ago or so during one of their beg-a-thon's, um, telethon's that 'If you just sent in your offering right now, God has given me the permission to command the 100-fold blessing on anyone who will give at this time.' 'Oh, this doesn't happen very often, this could be a once-in-a-lifetime event!' 'Oh get those calls and pledges in, call them in! We really need your money.' (John, why don't you sell your bracelet, that ought to keep you on the air a few days.) I wrote him a letter once, but I won't get into that. Anyway, (he never replied), so the phone lines were absolutely jammed, totally jammed. And you know what? The next six months people were waiting for their 100-fold blessings. It didn't happen, because that's not what God's Word teaches. In fact, Jesus said it's more blessed to give than to receive, and they [these crooks] teach that you should give to get. That's not what Jesus said. So anyway, people are writing in and they're getting close to suing them because they just can't stand the idea that they're not getting their '100-fold return.' And so now these guys had to come back on the air and say, 'We consulted Vines' Dictionary, Bible dictionary, and the real meaning actually didn't mean 100-fold.' I'm sorry, you sold it to me with the promise of 100-fold. These guys are on the take, ripping people off. God doesn't give you \$1000 because you give \$10. He's not going to do that, it's not the way the Kingdom operates. Yes, there are blessings to serving the

Lord, but it's not necessarily a big bank account, or health, or prosperity as we would count prosperity. [Not in this life, but there are plenty of promises that what we give in this age of ours will be repaid plentifully, with interest, in the age to come, in God's Kingdom when Eternal life is bestowed on us. That is what the Bible teaches. The point Pastor J. Mark Martin is making is quite accurate, showing that this "health and wealth doctrine" is not of God's Word, but a distortion of God's Word.] Let's get real. The Scripture we read earlier this morning, that Dave read to us, was 'Hey, don't be surprised by the fiery ordeal that comes among you, as some strange thing were happening to you. But to the degree that you share in the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing.' And so, it's not strange for a Christian to be hurting or suffering or in poverty, under trials. That's pretty common, because that's God's way of refining our lives [and building Godly character]. He wants to refine you. So anyway, the question we ought to ask is not 'Why is this bad thing happening to good old me?!' But what we ought to be asking is 'Why does anything good happen to bad old me?' I don't deserve anything but the worst. And so if I'm not in hell right now, I got a real good deal right now, because I deserve hell. You deserve hell. Hmm, I know Robert Schuller doesn't agree. 'Positive thinkers' today don't agree with that, do they? 'Me, deserve hell? Not me. I'm a great big bundle of potentiality.' The Bible says you're lost and going to hell. You have no potential apart from Jesus Christ. The only potential facing you is a life of eternity separated from God [unless you're saved, then all that changes]. And you don't need any more self esteem than you have right now, we're all born with a great big self esteem. Ask any baby. All a baby thinks about is itself. Look at the big babies around, too. All they think about is themselves. "Well my self esteem is so low I'm about to kill myself." That's because all you think about is yourself. If you were thinking about those who loved you, you wouldn't kill yourself, thinking about those whom this would hurt. "Well, (sniff, sniff), I'm so ugly, I don't have any self esteem." Well, stop looking

in the mirror all the time, you'd probably forget how ugly you are [laughter]. And don't write me letters, because I'll know who wrote them [more laughter]. I'm only kidding, I'm not looking at anybody in particular. Why don't you just thank God that you've got all your limbs and everything, you've got 10 fingers and 10 toes and you have everything you need. The point is, we need Christ's esteem, we need to hold him up a lot more than we hold ourselves up, think more highly of his reputation than we think about ours, think more about how our life reflects on him, than on how "we are". You see, if we thought more of Jesus and less of ourselves we wouldn't have a lot of these "self" problems that we have.

### *Don't Look Down Your Nose At The Goodness Of God*

The moral person definitely has some blind spots. The moral person [that is without Christ, not born-again] is going to go to hell just as surely as the pagan person. The only person that escapes that destiny is the born-again person, somebody with a personal relationship with Jesus Christ. There's only one way to escape the wrath of God, and that's to flee to Jesus, to run to Christ, and you have a new beginning. You can have all the wrong things that you've ever done washed away, blotted out of memory forever, and you can begin again. The very fact that we, before we are saved, have some time to get saved, shows the goodness of God. That's the point of verse 3 & 4. **Verse 4, "Or do you think lightly of the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance."** He says, 'Don't think lightly', the Greek means 'Don't look down your nose at.' It means, 'value, value the fact that God is dealing with you right now, first of all, out of his kindness.'

I was thinking just how good God is in the world he created, it's a good place to live. I mean, we were picking peaches. Where do you pick peaches?--in Chandler they were this size, I was a little disappointed, they looked like apricots, but we're in Arizona, right? But even in my backyard we had some nice pear peaches. We just picked them this week. And we found Boysenberries, thorn-less boysenberries, we go back there and we found four of them [bushes] that were hidden, they'd crawled into the peach tree. And that was sort of cool, because here are these four huge boysenberry bushes, and there just happen to be four of us out in the backyard, and we gobble them down. You know, God could have just put nutrition in dirt, and said, 'OK, eat dirt. I made you out of dirt, dirt will keep you alive.' And so we'd eat clods of dirt, you know. And we would have never known anything different. We'd probably be thanking God. But instead he made all this beautiful stuff and packaged it so neatly. In our backyard it's so neat. In our backyard we have this nightblooming cirrus cactus. Years ago, brother John Strot gave it to me, just a precious old guy, he's with the Lord now. This flower only blooms at night, and it's a beautiful big flower, I mean, it really was this big. And I mean, in the middle of the night these things open up, these beautiful white petals, they're the most lacey, frilly looking things. And you think, 'Well, who's out here to see them? I'm in bed by the time they wake up and bloom.' And the Creator, he just did it, let's create this, you know--the goodness of God. What if God just said, 'OK, there's water, but you're going to have to haul it all over the earth to where you want it.' I mean, by the truckloads we'd be hauling water. But instead God had this idea. 'I'm going to turn the water to vapor, and I'm going to move millions of tons of water [more like billions or trillions of tons]--I'm going to make it float in the air. And I'm going to just have it go to wherever I want it to go. It will fall on the mountains like snow, and I'll preserve it there, because you're going to need more at certain times of the year.' God has got this all figured out. And then it goes to the ocean

and evaporates again and it comes back! It's neat. The goodness of God, we see it in creation, we see it in our bodies. I was thinking, living in my house is like training for the Olympics right now because we have a 15 month old and a 3 year old, and they drag **everything** out, and it's all over the place. And I was thinking of the wonder of our bodies because just trying to walk down the hall, over the child gates, it's like a Triathlon. And I was thinking the other day how much I was doing, not even thinking about it, squeezing through this, oops, tight chair, here. I was thinking it's awesome, how it is being an uncoordinated person like me and not killing myself, and I can be thinking about something else and making my way around. I mean if NASA could have something like us they could put on the moon or a planet to do all the complicated tasks, they'd love it. God created us this way. And he even gave us eyebrows. Eyebrows are neat. I was thinking about eyebrows this week too. You know, without eyebrows the sweat would run right down into your eyes. But they're there so that the sweat runs around your eyes [or evaporates]. Isn't that tricky? If he would have made a mistake the sweat would have just come right in your eyes, you know just the little things, the goodness of God.

*Take Note Of God's Patience Towards Us &  
Mankind*

And then he goes on to say how God has been good to you with his forbearance. Forbearance means holding back what you deserve. It means you deserve that whipping, you deserve that death penalty, you deserve the punishment, but God holds back. Now he's holding back for a reason. This happens at our house too, with two little girls. They're so precious, they really are. Ellie and Emily, they got into it the other day, and it was quite a day. We

decided before we went to the pastor's conference we'd put them both in the stroller and see how it worked [chuckle], (they were beating up on each other). And little Ellie, she would grab Emily's hair, and Emily would scream, and so Ellie bit Emily I guess, and then Emily bit her back, left teeth marks on her face, and so, you know, I kept forbearing. "I'm going to spank you guys, Knock it off!" Of course Emily knows what that means, but Ellie, she doesn't know what that means. She just learns by doing and she learns this is a great way to get her sister's attention I guess, great way to get Mom and Dad's attention. And finally at the dinner table Emily did one thing too many and I said, "OK we're getting the spanking stick (it's just a little paint stick that we use at the right spot, the biblical spot in the biblical manner. We try not to do it in anger, not to bruise. You know I don't want to, it's not child beating or anything like that.) But it was time. "I'm getting the spanking stick" I said. Of course that usually has an effect all by itself. That's usually good for one. But this time it was time to get it. I got it, and just as I was about to give her what she needed she says "Look Daddy! Ellie's being silly!" And these kids, at an early age, they work for one another. Ellie had taken her spoon and put it in her mouth like this [side-ways], and we got the giggles, all of us, and there was no way, it just wasn't going to work. But think of God's forbearance. After you're a Christian, God's forbearance, many times you know what you deserve, a little spank, instead God hasn't given it to you. He wants you to change without that. And if you're not a Christian this morning, all the forbearance of God, waiting for you to change your way, waiting. And then it says "**and the patience of God.**" ***The old King James Version calls it "loving-kindness"***. The patience of God was shown in the pre-flood world where God saw that the wickedness of man was exceedingly great [had reached the point of universal evil] and that every intent of man's heart was evil continually [cf. Genesis 6-7]. That's what Genesis 6:5 says. The Bible says that God saw that man was wicked as man could be, and the only

way to get rid of the sin was to flush the whole thing, basically. That God, rather than doing it, gave men a hundred and twenty years to repent. He chose a man named Noah and he said to Noah, he said, **'Noah, you preach and build this ark, and warn this world of what is coming.'** And for a hundred and twenty years, 12 decades, God was patient, hoping the world would turn [to him]. For forty years in the wilderness he bore with his people while they murmured and complained. Once they got to the Promised Land he warned them **'Stop living like the world around them. Stop worshipping other gods. Stop living in immorality.'** But they would not. And God for eight hundred years warned them that if they didn't change they were going to go into captivity. Finally, 800 years later they did. Now God is very patient, and sometimes this gives people the wrong idea. They begin to sneer and say "Oh, you Christians, you've been saying that God is going to come, and that Jesus is coming. You've been saying that for hundreds of years. It's just a big hoax. Somebody made a big lie, it's just the way you keep people subject to you." God even knew that people would say stupid things like that. In 2 Peter chapter 3 the Lord says, look, 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter, go to the right, you'll find 2<sup>nd</sup> Peter in the Bible. **2 Peter 3:3, "Know this first of all," he says, "that in the last days mockers will come with their mocking, saying, 'Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers everything continues on just like it's always been.'" And in verse 9 God gives his answer, 'You want to know why the Lord hasn't come? Here's the answer.'** "The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish, but for all to come to **repentance.**" It's just because he's dealing with us in love and mercy and patience and forbearance and goodness that he hasn't returned. But you see, Paul is telling us in **Romans [2:1-4] 'Now don't mistake his forbearance, the kindness and patience of God for weakness. Don't mistake that. Because if you don't repent and turn to God, you are storing up wrath for you in the day of**

**his judgment.'** In other words, God is forbearing for one reason and one reason alone, and that is to draw some of you to Jesus Christ. He already today, when we gathered with one group, already today God has drawn people to himself. God is drawing some of you to himself, today. It's not a chance that you're here. It's not an accident. 'Oh, what a coincidence.' No, it's a Divine Appointment that you're here today, because Jesus Christ **wants** you. Jesus Christ **wants you**. Jesus Christ wants you to be drawn to him. This Bible says that you just can't decide to accept Christ. The Bible says that the only way you can accept Christ is that if the Father draws you to Christ [John 6:44,65]. And that's why it's so important for you today, that if you don't know if you were to die tonight where you would go. Where will you be? I tell you, apart from Jesus Christ, you will be in hell. I would be in hell apart from Jesus Christ. Apart from Jesus Christ that's where you will be. And the Bible says, unless you have a personal relationship with him, you won't be in heaven. You've got to come to Christ to be in heaven [the kingdom of heaven]. And that's why it's so important for you--today--if you sense the Lord drawing you, to respond, because the day may come when God will stop dealing with you. And he'll say 'Hey, it's a lost cause, man.' If you say, 'No' to Christ, and 'No' to the drawing of the Spirit, you make it easier for yourself to say 'no' a second time and a third time. Some have said it week after week after week, for year after year you've had loved ones trying to bring you to Christ. You have people who write you letters, people who tell you they're praying for you. And you keep hardening your heart. Well you're in a very dangerous spot, because right now you're not coming to Christ because **you** don't want to, because you **will not**. But the day may shortly come when you cannot, you see. It's just God dealing with you in patience, longsuffering, and goodness. He's given you life. I was talking to a precious guy in my office on Wednesday, before the evening service. And as we were talking he was sharing his heart, it was clear to me that he was not born-again, he was not a Christian. He's a very

moral man, a really neat guy. And as we were talking I said "You know," I said, "If you were to die tonight, are you sure you would go to heaven?" He says, "No." I said, "I don't think you would go to heaven if you were to die right now." I said, "You know where you would go?" He said "Yeah, I do." And I said "Don't you want to change that? We could pray right here, we could pray right here and you could give your life to Christ." And I was so excited, I thought, 'Man, he's gonna do it right in my office. Mike [MacIntosh] always gets to do this with people. I got one now! Neat Lord!' And he says, "Well, you know, part of me wants to,' and he said, 'Yeah, and another part of me doesn't." I said, "really?" I said, "You know what that is?" He says, "The devil?" I said, "You'd better believe it." I said, "There's a war going on for your soul right now, because you're hanging in the balance." I said, "It's just the mercy of God that your heart hasn't stopped beating, because if it did you would die." I said, "Please pray with me right now, and why don't you give your life to Christ?" "I just don't know." Well, part of me wanted to pressure, 'Come on, we're that close, come on, what's the matter? Come in,' and the Lord said 'Forget it, kiddo, no one can come to the Father unless the Father draws him to me.'-- so I said, "Let's pray that God draws you to Jesus." And let's pray God spares your life until that happens." And so we prayed that prayer and went out. I had the service, and Wednesday night, crazy message as it was, he made a decision and accepted Christ as his savior. Isn't that neat? Praise the Lord. He made a wise decision, you see. Moral person, very moral man. **But moral men and women don't have an inside track with God, you must be born-again.**