**“God is Blasphemed Because of You” – By Thailer Jimerson**

I’m teaching through the book of Romans each Wednesday night at 7pm here at the church building. Last Wednesday’s discussion brought us through some hairy passages.

In Romans 2.24, Paul quotes an Old Testament passage that states that the world treats God as irrelevant and even blasphemes him because of the conduct of Israel, his people. Those are harsh words and yet they reflect the reality that often the character of God is judged by the character of his people, in this case the hypocritical Jews.

 Christians can be guilty of the same God-dishonoring conduct today and be guilty of pushing just as many seekers away from the Lord because they fail to represent the attractive new way of salvation he came to bring. There are a few ways we can do this. One example would be the typical American version of Christianity popular in many mainstream churches that generally treats with flippancy the God of the Bible by carrying an air of disrespect to the glorious and weighty realities of sin, salvation, worship and Jesus Christ.

I remember hearing of one story. Charles Meisner wrote about Albert Einstein’s attitude towards organized religion: *“I do see the design of the universe has essentially a religious question that is one should have some kind of respect and awe for the whole business. It’s very magnificent and shouldn’t be taken for granted. In fact, I believe that is why Einstein had so little use for organized religion although he strikes me as a basically very religious man. He must have looked at what their preachers said about God and felt that they were blaspheming. He had seen much more Majesty than they had ever imagined and they were just not talking about the real thing. My guess is that he simply felt that religions he had run across did not have a proper respect for the author of the universe.”*

So, there’s that. But even more to Paul’s point would be the dead orthodoxy and hypocritical legalism seekers so often find in place of genuine, born-again gospel living. This is so common in the church as a sort of counterfeit Christianity. It looks relatively moral on the surface, but in truth it doesn’t pass muster. This religiosity in essence is no different than any other religion upon the face of this earth which always sets out the premise that you must be “good enough” or earn your place at the table. Christianity among the world’s religions alone starts from a different place in saying that you’re not good enough, and you could never earn your place – Christ had to do it for you. And when you receive that salvation as a gift, not as your due (Romans 4.4), you’re free to live for God completely, entirely, joyfully. And you serve him not from any sense of pay off – because you’ve already received the down payment of your pay off in Christ Jesus. You serve him simply for his sake, modeling yourself after his Son, Jesus Christ. This is Christianity – not mere moralism.

Do a little heart check at this point to see in which camp you really reside. Here are the signs of a moralist (as opposed to one born again, in Christ): (a) a moralist is smug (because they are good people); (b) a moralist is over-sensitive (their own goodness is their righteousness so you can’t undermine that); (c) a moralist is judgmental (they need to find others worse than them in order to be good); and, lastly, (d) a moralist is anxious (have they done enough?)