

Dear GOD



Connect group questions

Dear God, I'm not a very good Christian

1. Has this ever been your phrase – or how you feel? Under what circumstances?
2. What were the two categories of people Mark and Chris suggested, typically use such a phrase?
Mark said that the question is not whether you a very good Christian, but:

HAVE YOU BEEN RESCUED? Read: Romans 10:9-13

3. Declaring with your mouth and believing in your heart are together, to be taken as our response to the Lord Jesus. Why do you think the heart and the mouth are linked in this way?
See Matthew 12:34.
4. Why do we need rescuing? What do we need rescuing from?
5. What is it about the statement 'I don't think I'm a very good Christian' that misses the point about what being a Christian is?
6. Someone has said that religion can be spelt "DO" because it is all about what people must *do*. But Christianity is spelt DONE because it is all about what Jesus has *done*. How would you go about explaining this to someone who you suspect is not actually a Christian but says to you "I don't think I'm a very good Christian"?

ARE YOU RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY? Read: Romans 12:1-8

7. Ever been rescued from certain death? Or know someone who has? What was the impact?
8. What does 'offer your bodies as living sacrifices' mean?
9. A new Christian is so excited by their new life in Jesus and their rescue from sin and death. They ask you – 'how can I possibly show my thanks for all the Lord has done for me?' How would you answer?
10. Why do we often reduce our understanding of worship, to what we do for an hour on Sunday morning? What have many people missed by thinking that worshipping God equals church?
11. From Romans 12:2, how can we ensure that we know God's will for us?
12. A friend from church says to you, 'I'm not a very good Christian compared to you – look at all you do – you even help out on Sundays and go to a connect group'. How would you respond?
13. What sort of difficulties do we get in to if we compare ourselves with other Christians? What teaching in this passage are we ignoring when we do so?

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14. What will you take away from this message/these passages?
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Pray that by knowing we are rescued, we may never say again, "I don't think I'm a very good Christian".

Pray that we'll understand that the beautiful response to our rescue is to offer ourselves to God as living sacrifice and to one another as servant, using the gifts God has given.

Date: 8th September 2019
Services: 730, 930 Tewantin and Peregian
Series: Dear God
Title: I'm not a very good Christian
Passage: Romans 10:9-13; Romans 12:1-8
Outline:

The question is

1. Have you been rescued?
 2. Are you responding appropriately?
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INTRODUCTION

- “Dear God, I am not a very good Christian.”
- I **understand** this phrase... I really **do**.
- There are days when I resonate with this... when I'm feeling a failure... feeling the burden of my **sin** or of lost **opportunity**...
- In my experience, two types of people make such a comment.
- The first is someone who is actually **NOT** a Christian, but **thinks** they are.
- They **try** to live the Christian life, but constantly feel they do not 'make the grade'.
- So with some regret and a little embarrassment, they say to me “well, I'm not a very good Christian”.
- The **second** is a Christian who though they understand the gospel, constantly compare themselves either to *other* believers OR some **notion** of the sort of the perfect Christian they'd **love** to be, and feel they simply **do not match up**.
- When they compare their
understanding of the **Bible**,
the way they **serve** in **church**,
the nature of their **prayer** life,
what they feel able to **give**;
... to *other* Christians, or their 'ideal Christian' they feel a **failure** and so will say to me with a sense of awkwardness “well, I'm not a very good Christian”.
- or people might say this when
 - burdened by **sin**
 - or when other priorities have taken over and so they feel slack
 - or when their attendance at church has dropped off... and they feel guilty about that...
 - Or they feel detached or uninvolved in the life of the church...
- But you may be glad to hear, that I think the phrase is entirely **INAPPROPRIATE**...
- ... and I'm going to say upfront – there is **NO SUCH THING** as a 'not very good Christian'.
- Here's the **reality** – like being **pregnant** – you either **are** a Christian – or you are **not** a Christian!
- You can't be a **little bit pregnant**, and you can't be a **little bit Christian** – nor 'not a very good one'.
- The question is not whether you are a very good **Christian** or **not**...

The question is (or rather, the two questions are)

1. **Have** you been rescued?
2. **Are** you responding appropriately?

1. **HAVE** YOU BEEN RESCUED?

- Romans 10 – v9 have a look with me please - *If you declare with your mouth, “Jesus is Lord,” and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved.* ¹⁰ *For it is with your heart that you believe and are justified, and it is with your mouth that you profess your faith and are saved.*
- Now – this isn’t Hebrew nor is it poetry... but you see here a pattern which we see in Hebraic poetry... in the **Psalms** and elsewhere in the **Old Testament** – that the **same truths** are **repeated** for **emphasis**, using slightly **different words**...
- So “declaring with your mouth” and “believing in your heart” are in the end – referring to your response to Jesus...
- ...and actually can’t have **one** and without the **other** and end up ½ a **Christian** or something like that...
- So “declaring with your mouth” – and “believing in your heart” – remind us of our Lord’s saying, that from the **overflow** of the **heart** the mouth **speaks!**
- And “declare with your mouth” literally means to say the same thing as God about what he has said concerning his Son
- ...it is to agree with God, that **Jesus** is Lord over **all** – that he’s in **charge**...
- And if you **say** that – because you **believe** that – it is the sure sign that you’re **saved** – or **rescued!**
- So let’s be clear – it’s what you **believe** about **Jesus**... and therefore **declare** about Jesus, that indicates you’re **rescued** – you’re **saved**...
- I’ve spent **10 years** telling you **this!!**
- But it is no **effort** for me to tell you **again** this morning and have you **revel** in it **again**...
- OK – let’s just explore a couple of things... so we’re clear
- He talks about being ‘**saved**’... I’ve used the word ‘**rescue**’
- **Saved** from **what?** **Rescued** from **what?** ///
- Living as we do on the **coast** – we’re familiar with the concept of **rescue**...
- Someone gets themselves into trouble out in the **surf** or up on one of the **Glasshouse mountains**...
- They **cannot** help **themselves**...
- They are **powerless**... **helpless**...
- So they put their **hand up** if they are in the **surf**... or call the **helicopter rescue service** if they’re stuck on the side of the **mountain**... and someone comes along who has **everything** they **need** for their **rescue**...
- Interestingly – there’s no **mean** test for that rescue...
- There’s no valuation of a person’s **contribution** to **society**...
- There’s no **assessment** of a person’s **moral goodness**... they could even have a police **record**... but they’ll send the **life-saver** or the **helicopter** anyway...
- All that’s needed for the person to be **rescued**... is to admit they need **help**...
- When you’re stuck in the surf, you raise your **hand**...
- ...if you’re stuck on the side of the Glasshouse Mountains, you call **000**... ///
- And if you’re **stuck** in the **darkness** of pushing God **out** of your life and doing your **own thing**... and you want to be **rescued** and brought into the **light** – you confess **Jesus** is **Lord** and **believe** in your heart God raised him from the **dead**... and **you will be saved**...!!

- v10 - For it is with your **heart** that you believe and are justified, and it is with your **mouth** that you profess your faith and are saved.
- So – either you have called **out** to be **rescued** – or you have **NOT** called out to be **rescued**...
- You can't be **half** rescued... or a **little bit** rescued... //
- So that phrase... “I'm not a very good Christian”? ...do you see how it misses the mark?
- It misunderstands what being a Christian is...
- Its shifts the focus from **Jesus' rescue**, to our **efforts**...
- It makes Christianity not about **Jesus** has **done**, but what **I'm** trying to **do**...
- It becomes not about **receiving rescue**.... But trying (fingers crossed) to **achieve** (your **own**) **rescue!** //
- Friends, the question is not whether you are a very good **Christian** or **not**...
- ...but have you been **rescued!** //
- **HAVE** you been **rescued?** /
- Have you realised that you've lived your whole life pushing God **out**... that in fact - **you've** been **playing God?**
- And as a result, you're in **living** in the **dark**... and heading for **eternal** darkness...
- And because you've wanted to put God back on the **throne** – back in **charge** – you've said to him – I'm so **sorry** – I declare **Jesus** is **Lord** and I believe you raised **Jesus** from the **dead** – where he **died** for my **rebellion**.... //
- If you've **done** that – as I'm sure most of us here have done – you are **saved** – you've been **rescued**...!
- That's **glorious** – **liberating** – **wonderful news** – and you should **thank** the Lord every day that that is your reality! //
- So the question is not whether or not you are a **good** Christian... it's first and foremost, 'have you been **rescued**' // and then **second**:

2. ARE YOU RESPONDING APPROPRIATELY?

- We've explored before together, that if you have ever been in the situation where you were dramatically rescued from the **ocean** or the **mountain** – or whatever – than you would feel – I'm sure – a desire to **respond** to your rescuer with **gratitude**... maybe some desire to give back...
- Some 15 years ago... my sister and nephew were in a very bad road accident, and the care flight helicopter rescue people saved my nephew's life because of the wonderful way they cared for him...
- Since that time, my sister's family has promoted the work in NSW of the care flight helicopter and been involved in fund raising and profile raising events... - understandably...
- When you've been **rescued**... you long to **respond**...
- And friends... when you've grasped the **seriousness** of **Jesus' rescue** – from **darkness** to **light** – from **death** to **life** – from **enemy** to **friend** – from having **not received mercy** – to **having received mercy** – not one of his people to being one of his people - when you've truly **understood** that – **then you will want to respond**...!! //
- **How** can we respond?
- I remember Peter Bloomfield pointing out no so long ago the beautiful words in the old hymn 'When I survey the wondrous cross'... which in the last verse reads
Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were an offering far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all

- That picks up exactly what Paul is saying in Romans 12 – will you turn with me there now? Have a look with me at Ch 12:1
- *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God – this is your true and proper worship.*
- How do we respond to God's great gift of his **Son** – to the **sacrifice** of His Son? ... **to his great mercy?**
- Jesus **offered** himself to **us**; we offer **ourselves** to him.
- That is, we surrender to God saying: "everything I have and all that I am Lord, is yours" .
- Paul says that this is what worship is all about.
- Worship is not an hour in church on Sundays – it is living for God every moment of every day.
- It is a life of joyful service for the one who has saved us and he who is Lord of all.
- When we give ourselves entirely over to the Lord, then instead of being conformed to the pattern of this world, we will instead, be **transformed** by the **renewing** of our minds.... v2 - *Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is – his good, pleasing and perfect will.*
- We will let go of **worldly priorities** and **thinking** and instead see the world and see people the way God sees them.
- With our **minds renewed**, we will increasingly know God's **will** for us – and have all that is needed to **do** God's will.
- When a Christians says, "I'm not a very good one", I fear they have not yet understood what it means to give ourselves entirely to God in self-sacrifice.
- I fear they are trying to do **small bits and pieces** for **God** and therefore, never sure whether what they are doing is **right** or **enough**.
- responding to God's mercy is not doing **bits and pieces for God** – but a **total** and **radical surrender** of our **entire** lives to him! //
- Is **that** how you're responding to God's grace to you??
- Not by doing little jobs for God or the church – but rather – your mind set is – "my whole **life** Lord, is **yours**."
- "All that I **am**, and all that I **have** is yours"
- "Use me as you **will**... for **your glory** and the **good** of **others**..."
- God has uniquely **designed** you, **wired** you, **equipped** you for **your** place among the people of God...
- We explored this a few weeks back under the heading of 'do I have to go to church?' ... that was from 1 Corinthians 12...
- ...but I want to point out much the same thing from Romans 12
- Let's have a look at vv3-6a
- *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us.*
- Here's the logic – you offer your bodies as a **living sacrifice** – and the result is, the loving service of **others** with the **gifts** God has given you...
- When Paul says ' do not think of yourself more **highly** than you ought' ... I also want to say ' do not think of yourself **less** than you ought' – that is – a person, lovingly and profoundly rescued by God – and equipped and called for the service of **others**... //
- Don't tell me 'I'm not a very good Christian' ... you're **rescued**... and you're a **precious child** of **God** – **that's** who you are... and uniquely **gifted** and **qualified** to be **YOU** in the life of the church and to

serve others...

- v5 again – *just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, so in Christ, we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others...*
- So don't look at someone else and say 'I'm not a very good Christian, look at all that **they** do'... // you're not **them**... we don't and won't all have the same function... like the members of **YOUR** body don't all have the same function...
- *We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us*
- So don't **compare** yourself to **others**...
- ...but **DO** be faithful in using **your** gifts in the service of **others**... //
- I've said before that finding out your gifts is not something you have to undertake a 6-week course to do.
- It is simple.
- What are you **good** at and what do you **love doing**?
- That **talent** and that **delight** is how God has gifted you to serve us.
- Don't compare yourself to someone doing many other things in the life of the church and feel that somehow **you** don't **measure up**.
- Let **them** get on with how God has wired **them**, and **you** get on with how God has wired **you!** //
- For the question is – not “are you a good Christian?” – but are you responding **appropriately** to your rescue and calling!?

- **“I'm not a very good Christian”**... the comment of the person who is not **actually** a Christian... but is trying all by themselves to live up to some more standard.... And yet always feeling a failure... OF **COURSE!!**
- the question is 'not how good a Christian you are' ... but have you been rescued!?!?
- If you have **not** been rescued from a life without God to a life with God... from **dark** to **light** – from **death** to **life** – but today you'd **like** to be – or at least you would like to know more **about** it... act **today**... see me after the service... so that you can know the **assurance** and **joy** of being rescued...
- OR **“I'm not a very good Christian”** – the comment of a Christian who constantly **compares** themselves to others and thinks that the Christian life is spent trying to tick off **boxes**...
- The question is not “how good a Christian you are, but are you responding **appropriately** to God's astonishing rescue of your life?”
- Are you **offering** yourselves to God has a **living sacrifice** – surrendering **all**... and are you using the gifts God has uniquely given **you**, in the service of **others**?
- *If you **declare** with your **mouth**, “Jesus is Lord,” and **believe** in your **heart** that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved....*
- *in view of God's **mercy**, offer your bodies as a **living sacrifice**, **holy** and **pleasing** to God – **this** is your **true** and **proper** worship.*