*divING DEEPER* **Discussion Guide**

**TEXT SUMMARY**

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This week’s text (**Rom 2:12-29)** continues Paul’s argument that will conclude in the third chapter with the words “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” 3:23).

Here, Paul speaks to the role that the law plays in our condemnation before God. He will argue that

1. **God’s judgment will fall on all of us, regardless of whether we know His law.** (In a kind of parenthesis in verses 12-16, Paul explains that Gentiles who do not know God’s law will be judged apart from the law; they will be judged by the standards of their own conscience.)
2. **Having access to the law doesn’t mean we are free from condemnation.** It is observing the law, not knowing it, that would (if it were possible) spare us from God’s wrath. As Paul will explain later, knowing the law doesn’t make us righteous. It only highlights our rebellion against God.
3. **Outward forms of obedience do not justify us.** Paul uses circumcision to make his point because that rite was such an essential feature of Judaism. But the rite doesn’t matter; what matters is that no one is made right before God by observing the proper ritual.

**INTRODUCTION** (observation):

To get a good sense of Paul’s point, paraphrase every sentence that says something about “the law*.”* (Oh, wait, that’s almost every sentence.)

**DISCUSSION** (interpretation):

If you didn’t know better, you might almost think that Paul is holding out some sort of hope for justification through law-keeping. *Why does he suggest, even for a moment, that “the doers of the law who will be justified” (v. 13)? What does Paul mean to suggest in his assertion that Gentiles (those without the law) will be judged by the law of their conscience: “the work of the law is written on their hearts, while their conscience also bears witness, and their conflicting thoughts accuse or even excuse them” (v. 15)?*

**SO WHAT?** (application)

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*Application will always involve first person pronouns (“I” and “me” and “we” and “us”). And as we think about application, we will find that God’s Word has different effects on us, depending on our need of the moment. Sometimes God’s Word encourages and comforts, sometimes it convicts us and prompts us to repent, sometimes it clarifies what is true so that we are not confused. But it always points us to Jesus, and it always calls for a response.*

1. Imagine what it would be like to stand before the Holy One and be evaluated by the standards of your own conscience. Why is that such a terrifying prospect? What kind of person would want to be judged by the standards of his/her conscience?
2. Why is it that we are so sensitive to the sins of others and so insensitive to our own sin? How is it that we can spot the speck in our brother’s eye and still be unaware of the log in our own? Why are we this way? What can we do about this tendency without becoming morosely introspective and wallowing in shame and guilt?
3. Because our culture is so distantly removed from first century Judaism, we have a hard time seeing circumcision for what it was to the Jew in the Roman world: the essential marker distinguishing the people of God from other peoples. What does it mean to be “inwardly circumcised”? How can a Christ-follower bear the mark of being inwardly set aside for God?