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In our previous studies we saw that in the first seventeen verses of Romans, Paul introduced the subject of the gospel and some of the vital facts concerning this “good news”. Its source is God, and it concerns His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ, as foretold by the prophets in the OT Scriptures. The gospel is God’s power for salvation. It is received through faith, not for a select few but for everyone who will believe.

Beginning at verse 18 of the first chapter, Paul then answers the question, “Who needs the gospel?” In the next section of his letter, through Romans 3:20, he explains how and why all people are lost without it. The wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against the wickedness of men who suppress the truth to defend and attempt to justify their unrighteous lives (v.18).

How is God’s wrath revealed? The next few verses explain that He gives men over to uncleanness (v. 24), vile affections (v. 26), and a reprobate mind (v. 28). On certain occasions, God has also directly intervened in miraculous ways to show His wrath toward man’s sin: for example, the Flood (*Genesis 7*) and the destruction of Sodom and Gemorrah (*Genesis 19*).

Meanwhile, Paul also addresses the anticipated questions and potential excuses that people may offer, such as “What about those who have never heard the gospel. Are they lost?” In verse 19, it is clearly stated regarding the things which may be known of God in creation and have been revealed to them. Indeed, God has not left them without a revelation of Himself. They are lost, not because of knowledge they do not have, but of that they have but reject.

God’s divine and eternal power have been on display for all to see ever since the creation of the world. The majestic, elaborate, orderly, and vast creation demands a Creator. It requires a nonsensical belief bent on disbelieving God to believe that the universe (and we) evolved from nothing. (To quote the title of Norman Geisler and Frank Turek’s book, “I Don’t Have Enough Faith to Be an Atheist.”)

But, “although they knew God by His works, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks to Him.” Rather, they adopted futile philosophies and thus lost the capability to see and think clearly. The most popular worldviews are built on lies and deceptions as people have rejected God’s Word.

Three times (v. 24, 26, and 28) it is said that God gave man up. God is a perfect Gentleman who will not force Himself on people. He gives them every opportunity to believe, to place their faith and trust in Him through His Son. But if they will not, He will give them up.

We can see the effects in our world of uncleanness (v. 24), vile passions (v. 26), and reprobate minds (v. 28). The evil lusts of people’s hearts lead to their justification of all manners of behavior as listed in the remainder of the chapter. Verse 32 refers to not only those who do such things, but those who approve of others doing them. The Bible condemns tolerance of sin as sin in itself.

In chapter 2, Paul addresses another group... the self-righteous, smug moralists that would be quick to judge others but not themselves. God knows we all have the tendency to judge others; it is easier to see the faults in others than to honestly see our own. Christ says in His Sermon on the Mount, “Why do you see the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me take the speck out of your eye,’ when there is the log in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye. (*Matthew 7:3-5*)

God’s judgment is according to truth and righteousness. He does not have certain rules or loopholes for some; He shows no partiality. Some people look down on others, considering themselves more cultured or refined. Their sins are the same as others, whether or not they are more sophisticated in carrying them out.

Some people try to justify themselves that they are not the worst of sinners, and perhaps act better than most. The message of the gospel tells us that we all are guilty before God, and even “the best of us” cannot earn our salvation. In that sense, Billy Graham or Mother Teresa fall short of the glory of God just as do Stalin or Hitler. God does not grant us salvation if ‘our good outweighs our bad’, as some are deceived to believe. Every person needs the Lord Jesus Christ as much as another. He is the only way (John 14:6).

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- 1) Do we have difficulty discerning between ‘tolerance’ as shown by loving people as God does, and the tolerance of sin as described in Romans 1:32?
- 2) Is our own view of the world built on the foundation of God’s Word, or the foundation of the world’s teachings?
- 3) Do we ever try to justify ourselves or our actions by comparing ourselves to other people rather than to God’s standard of what is right?

God's Wrath on Unrighteousness Romans 1

¹⁸For the wrath of God is revealed from Heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

¹⁹For what may be known of God is manifested in them, because God has shown it to them.

²⁰For His invisible attributes, including His eternal power and His divine nature, have been clearly seen ever since the creation of the world, being understood through the things that have been made.

So men are without excuse, ²¹for although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, or give thanks to Him, but they became vain in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for images made like corruptible man, and birds and animals and creeping things.

²⁴Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵because they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

²⁷Likewise the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another.

Men committed shameful, indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

²⁸And furthermore, since they did not want to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do things that are not fitting and right.

²⁹Being filled with all manner of unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, and malice; and being full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and evil-mindedness; they are gossips, ³⁰slanderers, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boastful, inventors of evil ways, disobedient to parents, ³¹undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; ³²and although they know God's righteous judgment that those who practice such things are deserving of death, they not only do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.

Romans 2

God's Righteous Judgment

2 Therefore you have no excuse, every one of you who passes judgment on someone else. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you who judge practice the same things.

²But we know that the judgment of God against those who practice such things is based on truth.

³So when you, a mere man, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment?

⁴Or do you despise the riches of His goodness, kindness, and longsuffering patience, not knowing that the goodness of God is meant to lead you to repentance?

⁵But because of your hard, stubborn, impenitent heart you are storing up wrath against yourself on the day of God's wrath when His righteous judgment will be revealed.

Memory Verse for the Week

Psalm 100:3 (a) – *Know that the Lord, He is God; It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves.*