

Wednesday Evening Bible Study

November 9, 2022

Series - *The Life and Writings of the Apostle Paul*

The Letter to the Romans

The Righteousness of God

Text – Romans 1:18 – 32 – *The Wrath of God and the Unrighteousness of Man Revealed*

Introduction

In the first part of chapter one, we were introduced to the theme for this entire letter, “*the just shall live by faith*” (Romans 1:17). Here in the second part of the first chapter we see that the “unjust” lives according to the lusts of his flesh. The first part of the chapter reveals the righteousness of God, which is imparted and imputed to all who have placed their faith in Christ; and the second part reveals the wrath of God, which will be poured out on those who reject the offer of salvation.

It is very important to realize that this passage clearly teaches that God is not the cause behind man’s problems. Man keeps making bad choices. It was not God’s will for man to sin against him in the Garden of Eden, yet man chose to do so. Of course, God knew that Adam would sin, and God had a plan for man to be saved through the shed blood of His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. God gave man the Truth about the redemption that He offers those who place their faith in Christ. Yet, mankind, for the most part, continues to reject the Truth.

In our passage, we will see that mankind continues to step away from God and His Truth, and each time they do, God “gave them up” (vs. 24; 26; “over” v. 28). This does not mean that God gives up on His willingness to save them; it simply means that God allows them to exercise their free will; He doesn’t restrain them.

The only hope for mankind is to believe the Truth and receive the gift of salvation that is offered through repentance and faith in Christ.

God didn’t want Adam to sin, and doesn’t want you to sin today, but He will allow you to sin; and He will allow you to continue down that pathway, but the consequence of sin is God’s wrath. “*The wages of sin is death.*” God does not take pleasure in executing wrath. In fact, God’s desire is for you to turn away from sin (that’s repentance) and turn to Him for salvation (that’s forgiveness); but God will not force you to be saved, and He will give you up, or give you over, meaning He will allow you to have your way, just like it teaches in this passage.

- I. **God Gave Them Up, Because They Choked Back (Restrained or Suppressed) the Truth (vs. 18 – 24)**

"For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness (lack of reverence or fear) and unrighteousness (breaking of the Law) of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;" (Romans 1:18)

The idea here is that the Truth is available, knowable, and attainable for anyone and everyone. However, man chooses to reject the Truth that He can easily see; he represses it.

"For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved. He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil. For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved. But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God." (John 3:17-21)

Man can see the Light, but he rejects it, or suppresses it.

"But if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost: In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them." (2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

Each step a man takes away from the Light, the Light gets dimmer. Eventually, he will get so far away that he can't see the Light at all. But remember, it all started at a place where there was Light that he could see, and know, but he chose to suppress it.

"For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them." (Matthew 13:15)

Notice the phrase "is revealed" – that's present tense. You would think that it should read "will be revealed" in the future; but the punishment for the unjust is already revealed. We just read from John 3, where Jesus said, "*He that believeth not is condemned already*". The rejecters of God's Son are already condemned, and their punishment is already revealed.

"And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and

death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death. And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:11-15)

God reveals the Truth about Himself to all men through:

1. The Law Within Their Conscience (v. 19)

"Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them." (Romans 1:19)

"For when the Gentiles, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained in the law, these, having not the law, are a law unto themselves: Which shew the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the mean while accusing or else excusing one another;)" (Romans 2:14-15)

2. Creation (v. 20)

"For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:" (Romans 1:20)

He also reveals Himself to man through direct revelation, through the Word of God. God revealed Himself directly to Adam and Eve. He revealed Himself directly to Noah and his family who were the only human beings on earth after the flood. He revealed Himself directly in the past to the entire nation of Israel. He has directly revealed Truth to this nation (America), in that at one time the Truth about God permeated every aspect of our society, even being taught for most of our history in the schools. Our land was flooded with Truth, and even today there is still no excuse, because the Truth is readily available for anyone who wants it.

"Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened." (Romans 1:21)

Notice that man did not glorify God, and wasn't thankful, meaning that man doesn't recognize God as the source of life and blessing, and he does not appreciate what God has provided for him. Thanksgiving to God glorifies Him. One of the characteristics of this selfish and godless society is the lack of appreciation that it expresses. We are quick to complain when things are not going the way we want them to; we are quick to blame God for every tragedy that takes place in our lives; but when something good happens to us, we want to steal God's glory, and claim it for ourselves.

"I am the LORD: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." (Isaiah 42:8)

Think about all the good things, the wonderful blessings that you have. Do you recognize them as gifts from God?

"Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools," (Romans 1:22)

The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom [and knowledge]. Since man has thrown God out, he loses his wisdom, and starts believing all kinds of crazy things. Evolution is a perfect example of what I am talking about. A careful look at the creation will clearly point you to a Creator, but men choose instead to reject what they can clearly see and believe something that is preposterous and not provable. In fact, this passage clearly teaches the opposite of evolution, because mankind is not evolving into something better, he is devolving into something much worse.

"And changed the glory of the uncorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things." (Romans 1:23)

At this point, man has taken God off His throne, and re-fashions Him into a god of his own imagination. Because we no longer possess the Truth in righteousness, we now believe whatever we want. Man worships a god that doesn't exist except in His own mind.

And since your belief determines your behavior; since you have left the Truth, God now allows you to do what feels right to you. This is the epitome of humanism. God is gone; man has been put on the throne, and he is doing whatever he feels like doing. If it feels good, do it. If it's right for you, it's right. There are no absolutes, everything is relative.

In v. 23, we see that man begins to worship nature. Notice the result:

"Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:" (Romans 1:24)

The word "uncleanness" speaks of moral impurity. The word "dishonor" comes from the same root word as the word "vile" in v. 26.

God gave them up because they Choked Back (Restrained and Suppressed) the Truth.

II. **God Gave Them Up Because They Changed (Revised or Substituted) The Truth (vs. 25 - 27)**

"Who changed the truth of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen." (Romans 1:25)

The context of this really has the idea of man's creation of his own "truth", which is really a lie. The Devil is the "father of lies", and he loves it when man is on the throne and doing

his own thing. He'll encourage you to believe whatever you want as long as it is not the Truth.

Christians should be admonished here about changing God's Word, which is the same as changing Truth. We live in a day when the Bible is being re-written into many different perversions.

"For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:" (Romans 1:26)

"And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet." (Romans 1:27)

Notice that homosexuality is the result of a people who have abandoned the Truth of God. Notice very carefully that God says homosexuality is a "vile" affection.

God gave them up because they choked back, restrained, and suppressed the Truth.

God gave them up because they changed, revised, and substituted God's Truth for a lie.

III. God Gave Them Over to a Reprobate Mind Because They Chose to Continue (Remain or Stay) in their Rebellion Against the Truth (vs. 28 – 32)

"And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;" (Romans 1:28)

"Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity (means bad character, depravity of heart); whisperers," (Romans 1:29)

According to Ephesians 5:18, the Christian is supposed to be filled with the Spirit of God. In Ephesians 3:19, the Bible says that we are to be filled with all the fullness of God. Here in this passage, we see that the man who rejects Christ is filled with all the things that God is opposed to. (also Mark 7:20 – 23; Galatians 5:19 – 21; 1 Corinthians 6:9 - 11)

"Backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents," (Romans 1:30)

"Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable (stubborn, unyielding), unmerciful:" (Romans 1:31)

"Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." (Romans 1:32)

These people know that what they are doing is wrong, and they know that punishment that is coming, but they simply have become hardened to the point where they do not care. They take pleasure in wickedness.

I'm reminded here of the progression of wickedness that was taught in the first psalm:

"Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, Nor standeth in the way of sinners, Nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful." (Psalm 1:1)

IV. God Will Give Them Grace and Mercy If They Cherish (Repent and Receive or Surrender to) The Truth

Though this wonderful truth is not contained in this chapter, Paul is building up to it and it will be revealed in later chapters.

"Even the righteousness of God which is by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:" (Romans 3:22)

"But God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." (Romans 5:8)

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Romans 6:23)

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved. For with the heart man believeth unto righteousness; and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. ... For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved." (Romans 10:9-10, 13)