

Sermon #4, Romans 1:18-32  
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The word, "gospel" means "good news." Because it is the "gospel of God", the gospel is "good news from God."

What is the "Good News" from God?

"That in the Person of His Son, God has made provision for the most basic and the greatest need that every human being has-the need for righteousness! Without righteousness, the perfect God cannot accept us. And in ourselves, we stand before the perfectly holy and righteous God destitute and void of any righteousness. We possess no inherent goodness that is sufficient for God to look on us with favor. Therefore, in and of ourselves, we are hopeless and lost and under God's wrath. But the Good News that has to do with God's Son is this: In Him (Jesus), God has provided a righteousness that He will freely give us through faith, without merit on our part, without work on our part, without money from us."

### Three Important Facts About The Section of Romans That We Are Now Beginning To Study.

1.) Romans 1:18 begins one big section in the Book of Romans that goes through Chapter 3:20 and the entire section is a lengthy expose on the subject of every person's lack of righteousness (sin) and God's anger against man.

2.) A valid question: Why Does Paul talk so much about sin? Why so much bad news, especially after mentioning the good news of God in Rom. 1:1, 2, 9, 15, 16, 17?

3.) Paul breaks this lengthy section (1:18-3:20) down into the following 3 sub-sections:

A.) Rom. 1:18-32, God's Indictment of the Gentile world as Paul found it in his day-the whole Gentile world lacks righteousness.

B.) Rom. 2:1-16, God's indictment of any person who judges the Gentile world-every self-righteous person lacks righteousness.

C.) Rom. 2:17-3:20, God indictment of the Jews-every Jew lacks righteousness.

Romans. 1:18-32, God's Indictment of the Gentile world as Paul found it in his day-the whole Gentile world lacks righteousness.

6 very important truths that God wants us to know from Romans 1:18-32.

1.) God is presently displaying His wrath from heaven upon men due to their godlessness and wickedness (v. 18a).

V. 18a, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men . . ."

2.) Why God is displaying His wrath. It is because certain truths about God have been made plain to all the Gentile world (v. 19) and the Gentile world has resisted these truths (v. 18b).

V. 19, " . . .since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them"

A.) What has been made plain to the Gentile world about God: God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature (v. 20a).

V. 20, "For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen . . ."

B.) How they have been made plain: through God's physical creation (v. 20b).

V. 20, "For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood by what has been made . . ."

C.) How long these truth about God have been made plain: from the first day of creation (v. 20).

V. 20, "For since the creation of the world, God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood by what has been made . . ."

Cross-reference **Acts 14:8-18; Ps. 19:1-4**

D.) How the Gentile world has responded to these self-evident truths about God: the entire Gentile world and every person in it has "suppressed" (held down, denied) these truths (v. 18b).

V. 18, "The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness."

3.) Next, Paul tells us how the entire Gentile world has suppressed, held down, denied these self-evident truths about God found in creation. The entire Gentile world has responded negatively and sinfully in the following ways:

A.) They did not glorify God as God (vv. 21a, 23)

V. 21a, "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God . . ."

V. 23, "and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."

B.) They did not humbly express gratitude to Him (v. 21b).

V. 21b, "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God, nor gave thanks to him . . ."

C.) They chose to think wrongfully and sinfully of God and the more they did so, the less their hearts could comprehend God and their darkened hearts led them into gross idolatry (v. 21b-22).

V. 21, "For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God, nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened."

V. 22, "Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools . . ."

V. 23, "and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles."

4.) Why God is displaying His wrath. God is displaying His wrath on the Gentile world because of their sinful response to the revelation of Himself that He has given them in creation/nature (v. 20c).

A.) The entire Gentile world is without excuse before God because God has given sufficient revelation about Himself in creation/nature for Gentiles to glorify Him even though they never hear the Bible. God is angry that the Gentile world hasn't responded appropriately to the revelation that He has given in creation (v. 20c).

V. 20c, "For since the creation of the world God's invisible qualities-his eternal power and divine nature-have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse."

Why is the Gentile world without excuse? God has revealed Himself in his physical creation and the Gentile world has not handled the revelation in a way that shows honor, love and respect for the God who stands invisibly behind his creation. Instead, the Gentile world has tried to deny/suppress what they know must be true about God through living godlessly toward God and wickedly toward their fellow man.

Mankind, (no matter where he has lived or when he has lived, even at those times and in those places in the world where God's written revelation has never penetrated), has heard from God and had adequate revelation as to how to please God. The opportunity to know God has come to every person through nature/creation and conscience. Therefore, there is now no valid excuse for ignorance of God and His ways.

B.) God's standard for judging the Gentile world (when they have not heard the Word of God) is not the Word of God (the Bible), but God's standard for those who never hear the Word of God is the revelation/information about Himself that God has made known in the physical creation. This information is enough to convince the Gentile world to live righteously, but no Gentile has done so. Therefore, they are without excuse before God (v. 20c) and God's wrath is subsequently upon them and they will eventually perish in hell. See also Romans 2:12-16.

Romans 2:12-16

V. 12, "All who sin apart from the law will also perish apart from the law, and all who sin under the law will be judged by the law".

V. 13, "For it is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God's sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous."

V. 14, "Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, . . ."

V. 15, "since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now defending them."

V. 16, "This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares."

From Romans 1 and 2, we learn that the Gentile world is taught by both creation/nature and conscience about God and how to live for him!

Mankind, (no matter where he has lived or when he has lived, even at those times and in those places in the world where God's written revelation has never penetrated), has heard from God and had adequately revelation as to how to please God. The opportunity to know God has come to every person through nature/creation and conscience. Therefore, there is now not valid excuse for ignorance of God and His ways.

5.) How God is displaying His wrath on the Gentile world. According to Paul, God is displaying His wrath in the following two ways:

A.) God "gave over" the Gentiles and allowed them to pretty much live as they pleased with very little restraint from Him (vv. 24, 26, 28). Cross reference Ps. 81:12; Acts 7:42, 14:16.

V. 24, "Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another."

V. 26, "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones."

V. 28, "Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do what ought not to be done."

Ps. 81:11-12, "But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts to follow their own devices."

Acts 7:42, "But God turned away and gave them over to the worship of the heavenly bodies."

Acts 14:16, "In the past, God let all nations go their own way."

B.) God allowed the Gentile world to progressively go from bad to worse (v. 24-31).

V. 24, "Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another."

V. 25, "They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator-who is forever praised. Amen."

V. 26, "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones."

V. 27, "In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion."

V. 28, "Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do what ought not to be done."

Notice Paul's list of 21 sins.

V. 29, "They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, . . ."

V. 30, "slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; . . ."

V. 31, "They are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless."

6.) The final condition of the Gentile World. According to Paul, all the people who comprise the Gentile world do not care about righteousness for themselves or for others (v. 32); they do not care that they deserve to be punished with death by God.

V. 32, "Although they know God righteous decrees that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them."

Vs. 18. Notice with me 2 things from vs. 18.

1.) God's wrath is being revealed presently from heaven. Not that it will be revealed in the future, nor that it has been revealed in the past, but that it is being revealed-present tense. At this point, Paul doesn't tell us how God is revealing his wrath, but he only tells us that God is displaying or making his wrath known on the world in Paul's day. And you remember that I told you in an earlier sermon on Chapter 1 that this is vintage Paul. Paul will introduce a thought and then another thought will come to his mind and Paul will take off on it and return to his first thought at a later time. This is what Paul does here in vs. 18. He tells us that God is angry and that God is revealing or making known his anger presently in Paul's day, but it will be later that we discover in the Chapter how God is making his anger known.

2.) Notice also from vs. 1 that Paul tells us that God is venting his anger upon mankind's godlessness and wickedness. As we study the Scriptures to learn about God, we discover that these two things are the only things that make God angry or cause Him to vent his wrath: Godlessness and Wickedness. Both terms express two types of sin. The first is sin against God and the second is sin against man or those made in the image of God. The Scriptures often impress upon us that we can only sin in these two

ways. I remind you that the 10 Commandments are broken down into 2 tablets. The first tablet consisting of the first 4 commandments inform us of our obligations toward God and the second tablet consisting of the last 6 inform us of our obligation toward our fellow man. Jesus said 3 times in the gospels that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord thy God and the second is like unto it, love your neighbor as yourself.

Here Paul, and consistently throughout the Scriptures then, we find our obligations as God's created beings always given to us in this order.

3.) Notice too from vs. 18, that Paul says that men suppress truth by their wickedness. The word for "suppress" means that they hold it down, they deny it, they attempt to obliterate it through being godless and wicked.

Vs. 19. Now beginning in vs. 19, Paul is going to tell us why God is revealing His wrath on man's sins. It is for this reason: God has made some things known to all the Gentile world about Himself and they have suppressed the truths that God has made known about Himself. Look at vs. 19.

Vs. 20. How has God made things known plainly about Him? From His creation! Look at vs. 20.

Vs. 20 tells us that by opening their eyes, looking at creation, the Gentile world can learn 2 things about the true and living God even if they never read the written Word of God or hear the spoken Word of God. What can the Gentile world learn about God and what should they know about Him?

- 1.) The Gentile world can clearly see that God has eternal, awesome power.
- 2.) The Gentile world can clearly see that there is a good, loving, and kind God, who is far superior to anything they have ever seen on the earth.

This revelation from God to man in nature/creation leaves man without excuse. Why does it leave the Gentile world without excuse? Because the Gentile world has not handled the revelation in a way that shows honor, love and respect for the God who stands invisibly behind His creation. Instead, the Gentile world has tried to deny this truth (suppress it) through living godlessly toward God and wickedly toward their fellow man.

Vs. 21. What does he mean when he says, "Although they knew God"? He doesn't mean they were saved and knew God in that way. By saying that "they knew God" he means that they knew certain things about God to be true through observing creation. They knew the things mentioned back in the previous vs. 20. They knew that God was all powerful and they knew certain things about His divine nature.

But look what the Gentile world did with the information.

#### NOTES:

Romans 1:18-3:20 form one big section of the Book of Romans. It divides into the following 3 sections.

- 1.) Rom. 1:18-32, God's Indictment of the Gentile World as Paul found it in his day-the whole Gentile world lacks righteousness.
- 2.) Rom. 2:1-16, God's indictment of any person who judges the Gentile world-every self-righteous person lacks righteousness.
- 3.) Rom. 2:17-3:20, God indictment of the Jews-every Jew lacks righteousness.

Why is righteousness necessary? Because we have none of our own.

-The Gospel is always unwelcome to human nature because of its attitude toward sin.

-Outline of Chapter 1:

A.) The unrighteousness of the Gentile World-1:18-32.

B.) The unrighteousness of the Jews-2:1-3:8.

C.) The universal unrighteousness is confirmed from the OT-3:9-20.

-The heathen are taught both by nature and conscience (1:18-32) and what they are taught is enough to make them accountable to God.

-For the Jew and Gentile, God has different sets of standards. The Gentile is held to the standard of nature and conscience. The Jew is held to the standard of God's revealed law in the OT.

-Chapter 1:18-32 can be outlined as follows:

1.) Divine Wrath (vs. 18)

2.) Adequate Opportunity (vv. 19-20)

3.) Sinful Declension (vs. 21)

Indifference to God soon makes it inevitable progress downwards. The outcome of indifference toward known truth was false notions and worthless speculations about God, followed by the disappearance of the idea of God from their minds.

4.) Culpable Foolishness (vs. 22).

Pride of wisdom resulted from this attitude toward God and yet in reality, practical folly was the result in their lives.

5.) Utter Degradation (vs. 23).

The outcome of all this indifference, neglect, wilfulness and folly was idolatry in the form of fetishism. Conceit inevitably leads to idolatry. Man must have something to worship.

6.) Divine Discipline (vs. 24)

Notice the phrase, "God gave them up" in vv. 24, 26, and 28.

We find a similar phrase in Ps. 81:12 and Act 7:42.

7.) Terrible Impurity (vs. 24)

Idolatry inevitably leads to sensuality.

8.) Gross idolatry (vs. 25)

9.) Unnatural Vice (vv. 26-27).

This is a lower depth of evil and again we find the solemn words, "God gave them up."

10.) Complete Depravity (vv. 28-32)

Once again, we find the words, "God gave them up." This leads to the inability to even think straight. Man can come to the place where the definite distinctions between right and wrong are confused and lost altogether.

Man's depravity is first described in general terms, "To do those things which are not fitting.", "no convenient." And then a list of 21 illustrations are given of "things not fitting."

Notice that list refers to sins of inward disposition and outward acts, to sins of thought, word and deed, to wrong against self and against neighbor, as well as against God.

Lists of Paul's sins:

Romans 1:28-32 (21 sins listed)

Gal. 5:19 (17 works of the flesh)

Eph. 5:3 (6 sins)

I Tim. 1:9 (14 kinds of sinners)

II Tim. 3:2-5 (19 sins)

I Cor. 6:9-10

II Cor. 12:20

-Mankind, no matter where he has lived, has heard from God and had adequate opportunity to please God. The opportunity to know God has come to every man through nature and conscience. Therefore, there is now no valid reason for ignorance of God and

His ways. God has made Himself known to all by ways of nature and conscience (Acts 14:17; 28:1-6; Ps. 19). There has been adequate opportunity to know God through His works and this is sufficient for mankind so that mankind's unrighteousness is inexcusable. There is no self-defense before God. Man may not see much from nature, but what he does see he is able to see clearly enough that God holds him accountable and says he is without excuse.

-Christ is presented to us in the Bible in two ways:

- 1.) As Savior
- 2.) As Judge (Matt. 7:21-24; Acts 17:31).

-Romans 1:18-32 may be called the Christian philosophy of history.

-God's wrath is revealed against "all the ungodliness and unrighteousness of men".

These are the two main expressions of evil: impiety toward God and injustice toward man.

-Vs. 18, the word translated, "suppress" means to hold down. The word and the passage is intended to inform us that mankind knows the truth, but everyone suppresses it by their unrighteousness living.

### LESSONS FROM ROMANS 1

1.) Divine Revelation is sufficient. Man has always had the opportunity of knowing God and doing His will according to the light of nature and conscience.

-“Without excuse” is God's indictment, based on the fact of a Divine revelation in nature and conscience. God has given light to every man who comes into the world (Jn. 1:9)

2.) Human Sin is Deliberate.

-From the very first, sin has been a matter of willfulness. No one can justly say, "I cannot help it."

3.) Human development is downwards

-Idolatry is progressive. At first, we see neglect. Man, knowing God, did not trouble himself to acknowledge God or to thank Him. From this comes emptiness of mind and senselessness of heart, followed by a pride which was essentially foolishness, which led to gross idolatry. From idolatry, sensuality necessarily came. When the head goes wrong, the heart soon follows.

### ROMANS 1:24-32

-This is the condemnation that light has come into the world and men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil."

-We see from this passage, "The Awful Possibility of Sin."

Sin starts with the neglect of light, which in turn leads to the rejection of light, followed by madness, idolatry, vice, manifold evil and a malignant badness that takes a positive satisfaction in wrong-doing (vs. 32).

"The possibilities of evil in the human heart apart from divine grace are as real as they ever were, and no one who knows the plagues of his own heart will ever dare to say that even these depths of evil are impossible, apart from the restraining influences of the grace of God."

One of the leading men of the Protestant Reformation, John Bradford, when seeing a man carried off to die for having committed murder, said, "There but for the grace of God, go I. It is when a man is nearest to God that he sees what he is, and if it were not for God in his life, what he could and would be. And it is in just a mood while reading Romans 1:18-32 that the conscience-stricken man will say, "God be merciful to me the sinner, if not already in act, then in potential."