

ROMANS CH.1 (Part 2)

MAJOR THEME: THE GOSPEL: THE RIGHTEOUSNES OF GOD REVEALED IN CONDEMNATION

Hymn: #458 Rock of Ages

(Modified Outline of John A. Witmer- Assistant Professor of Systematic Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary; The Bible Knowledge Commentary; SP Publications; 1983; p.438)

- 1) Introduction and Theme (1:1-17)
 - A) Apostolic Greeting (1:1-7)
 - B) Apostolic Travel Plans (1:8-15)
 - C) Apostolic Attitude (1:16-17)

- 2) **Righteousness of God Revealed in Condemnation (1:18-3:20)** –The first step in the revelation of the Righteousness of God is to fully convince people of their need for God’s Righteousness. This established in the condemnation of all humanity.
 - A) **Against Pagan Humanity (1:18-32)** Pagan defined as followers of polytheistic, animistic, ancestor or traditional culture religions; one who has little or no religion and who delights in sensual pleasures and material good- an irreligious or hedonistic person.
 - i) **Reasons (1:18-23)**
 - (1) **For Suppressing God’s Truth v. 18**
 - (a) The “wrath of God” here is currently being revealed and is to be distinguished from the “coming wrath” (1 Thes. 1 :10) that believers are to be saved from
 - (b) It is seen primarily in God’s “giving over” which we will see
 - (c) “Suppressing the truth” means wilfully and knowingly holding at bay that which one KNOWS to be TRUE; this is not ignorance, it is knowing right and choosing wrong.
 - (d) Question: “What was the name of the tree and fruit from which Adam and Eve ate from?” The tree of the knowledge of good and evil
 - (e) Since the Garden fall all humanity has flowing within them the “knowledge of good and evil”. This knowledge was received in disobedience to God and as a result, sin insures that though the good is known, it is suppressed, by choosing evil and wickedness
 - (f) Suppressing the truth is also suppressing reality (the same word in Greek); it is to deny the way the things actually ARE and to live in a “fantasy world” of one’s own making. God determines and declares reality, to choose anything else is suppressing the truth.
 - (2) **For Ignoring God’s Revelation v. 19-20**
 - (a) Men are also condemned for ignoring God’s testimony “made plain” in Creation
 - (i) In the Heavens: (Ps. 19:4) “The heavens declare the glory of God; the skies proclaim the work of his hands. Day after day they pour forth speech; night after night they display knowledge. There is no speech or language where their voice is not heard. Their voice goes out into all the earth, their words to the ends of the world.”
 - (ii) On the earth: God’s invisible qualities of eternity, power and deity are “clearly seen and understood from what has been made”
 1. Ecc. 3:11 “He has also set eternity in the hearts of men”.
 - (b) All humanity is without excuse. V.20
 - (i) Everyone, all the way from the jungles of unreached people groups to the streets of Paris, New York and Sydney, knows that God exists.

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- (ii) God's word says they do and yet they ignore his daily expressions and suppress this knowledge by choosing wickedness, sin and self over God.
- (iii) Their condemnation is not based on rejecting Jesus Christ of whom they may not have heard of, but rather they are condemned for sinning against the light they do have.
 1. Dan Crawford a British missionary to Africa said: "The heathen are sinning against a flood of light" (*Wiersbe; Romans-Be Right; p. 32*)
 2. This is the first answer to "What about the lost tribesman of Papua New Guinea who has never heard the gospel?"
 3. The second answer is that "God moves heaven and hell to ensure that as anyone responds to the light they do have, more light is given" ie: Peter going to Cornelius in Acts Ch. 10
 - a. Cornelius had responded to the "light" he had seen in Judaism as demonstrated by his behaviour. He was God fearing, gave generously to those in need; prayed regularly. God sent him more light, in fact THE Light, through the Apostle Peter. He and his whole house were saved.
 - b. Don Richardson's 1978 book titled "Eternity in Their Hearts" illustrates more than 25 incredible stories of missionaries arriving to unreached peoples who were not expecting them but were in some way responding to and prepared through God's "flood of light" to receive the gospel.
 4. John 1:1-5 "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. **Through him all things were made**; without him nothing was made that has been made. **In him was life, and that life was the light of men.** The light shines in the darkness, but the darkness has not understood it."
 5. John 1:9 "The true light that **gives light to every man** was coming into the world."
 6. But, alas, even with general and specific revelation, Jesus himself declared: "This is the verdict: **THE Light has come** into the world, **but men loved darkness instead of light** because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." John 3:19-21

(3) For Perverting God's Glory v.21-23

- (a) Men are also condemned for failing to glorify God and for failing to give Him thanks.
 - (i) This inevitably leads to futile thinking and darkened hearts of independence
 1. But humanity is not as independent as it thinks, for it is wired to worship something, even if they have to manufacture it themselves in lieu of God.
 2. Darwinian evolutionists are poster children for this third reason for condemnation. V.22 "Although they claim to wise they became fools (lit. $\mu\omega\rho\alpha\acute{\iota}\nu\omega$) "morons". They exchanged the glory of God for idols made to look like:

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- a. Mortal men- they idolised themselves
- b. Birds, animals and reptiles- oddly enough they worshipped man made idols of “created things” which are clearly displaying God’s invisible qualities.

ii) **Results (1:24-32) The result of exchanging the truth of God for a lie is wrath from God in the form of “being given over” to these things:**

(1) **Abandoned** to Fornication v.24-25

- (a) The normalization of pre-marital sex today is a clear sign of wrath; of God actively letting people go.

(2) **Abandoned** to Sexual Perversion v. 26-27

- (a) “God gave them over to Lit. “passions of disgrace”. Both men and women were given over to homosexual instead of heterosexual relationships. Men were inflamed with lust for one another. The word here is ὀρέξει- “sexual lust” and is used only here in the NT and differs from the more common word for lust in v.26 πάθη
- (b) AIDS/HIV is certainly one of the “due penalties” (Lit. “fitting recompense”) that men receive “in themselves” by such acts. I had a gay uncle who I watched die of this and it was tragic. More tragic is that now entire nations in Africa are wiped out by AIDS leaving millions of orphaned and often AIDS infected children.
- (c) The normalization of the SSM and LGBT agenda and lifestyle is a clear sign of wrath; of God actively letting people go.

(3) **Abandoned** to a Depraved Lifestyle v.28-32

- (a) V. 28 “...he gave them over to a depraved mind”, Lit. an “un-testing mind”
 - (i) An un-testing mind believes anything...“I saw it on the internet, it must be true”
 - (ii) An un-testing mind has no standard with which to measure; ie: no “cannon” “rule” of Scripture by which to measure truth from error.
- (b) V. 29-31 Paul lists 21 specific behaviours of a depraved life that when continually engaged in is a fearful sign of a life that has been given over by God.
- (c) Finally, Paul closes this first revelation of the Righteousness of God seen in condemnation with the final evidence: V.32 **“Although they know God's righteous decree 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.”**
 - (i) Such bold irreverence and “in your face God” rebellion fully justifies God’s condemnation. He is right and righteous to do so and in fact would be unrighteous if He did not.

(4) To “be given over” is a terrifying prospect

- (a) Have you ever found yourself in the grips of some inward or outward sin that you knew was wrong, yet you persisted in it? Perhaps you are there now. If so, just remember two things:
 - (i) First, God is “compassionate and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in love and faithfulness; maintaining love to thousands and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.” (Ex.34:6-7a) This is the God an honest

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though sinful soul encounters when responding to the Holy Spirit's convicting light upon his guilty conscious.

- (ii) Second, "Yet he does not leave the guilty unpunished" (Ex. 34:7b)
 - 1. The danger of toying with sin is that it exposes us to powers far beyond our control that eventually can deaden any kind of repentance. It eventually will seek to "suppress the truth" and resist the Holy Spirit's convicting light.
- (b) There is a "tipping point" a "being given over" to our sins by God. The danger is that none of us knows where that point is exactly. If you are worried or fearful that you have already gone "over the falls", that worry and fear is a good sign that you actually haven't. When you cease to care or fear sin... that is terrifying prospect.
- (c) Beware of your little peccadillos.

This is the sobering and blunt assessment of the world we live in. As we shall see, God's condemnation is not arbitrary, but rather according to divine standards and is against not only pagans but unfaithful Jews, indeed all humanity. That includes you and me.

The first step for everyone is to come to grips with their individual participation and responsibility in the things that have been described here. You may not think you are as bad as the "Barbarians" next door or down the street, but if you are a descendant of Adam (and you are), the Book of Romans says this is where you start...a deep and profound sense of need.