

BCM Bible Study – September 1/2, 2014

Romans 1:18-2:29 – God's Judgment, Man's Guilt; Everybody needs the gospel

Notes

This is a longer passage, so don't worry if you don't get through all of it. This passage deals with some uncomfortable topics, including God's wrath and judgment, human depravity, and sexual sins. Remember that the beginning of Ch 1, about the glory of the gospel, is foundational to this passage. Also remember that the church in Rome Paul is writing to was a mix of Jewish and Gentile believers.

Intro

Before looking at this section, it is helpful to see the conclusion Paul eventually reaches in 3:9-10 - "... all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: 'None is righteous, no, not one.'"

What is one example of the world's or mankind's corruption that was evident to you in the past week?

Read 1:18-32 – God's Anger against Sin, Unbelief and its Consequences

What initial thoughts do you have when you think of God's wrath? How does this passage support or challenge those feelings?

Notice the parallel structure of 1:17 and 1:18, how both the righteousness of God and the wrath of God are revealed. How do you put these two concepts together? How does this passage help you?

What are the steps of the downward progression of sin and ungodliness seen in v18-32?

What do these verses say about the state of mankind without God?

When in your life have you seen yourself described in these verses?

Read 2:1-16 The Jews could not be justified by the law of Moses, any more than the Gentiles by the law of nature.

How would you describe the man (v1) Paul is addressing in this passage? What would this man's response to 1:18-32 be?

What are examples in the news of people who support certain standards of behavior but don't even follow these themselves?

Why might God's kindness lead people to be either repentant or presumptuous? (2:4)

Verses 5-16 describe a future day of judgment. What will God consider important and unimportant on that day?

Read 2:17-29 - The sins of the Jews confuted all their vain confidence in their outward privileges.

Paul now turns his attention to the Jewish believers. According to Paul, how does this Jewish person view himself and others?

How has religious hypocrisy hurt the cause of Christianity today?

What was the original intent of circumcision? (see Gen 17:1-14 for info) How is that being twisted here?

Conclusion

How have you seen God's kindness lead you to repentance? In what areas of your life might you be "presuming on the riches of his kindness, tolerance, and patience"? (2:4)

Terms

Sin: an immoral act considered to be a transgression against divine law; described in the Bible as transgression of the law of God and rebellion against God. Through Adam sin entered the world, and so death was passed on to all men because “the wages of sin is death.” God used the principle of imputation (“to take something that belongs to someone and credit to another’s account”) to benefit mankind when He imputed the sin of believers to the account of Jesus Christ, who paid the penalty for that sin—death—on the cross.

Why does God hate sin: God hates sin because it is the very antithesis of His nature. The psalmist describes God’s hatred of sin this way: “For You are not a God who takes pleasure in wickedness; no evil dwells with You.”

God hates sin for the simple reason that sin separates us from Him: “But your iniquities have separated you from your God.” Sin always brings separation, and the fact that God hates sin means that He hates being separated from us. God’s hatred of sin implies that He loves His people and wants to bless them.

Suppress the truth in unrighteousness: meaning either such who know the Gospel, which is “the truth”, and do not profess it openly, but hold and imprison it in their minds, which is a great piece of unrighteousness; or if they do profess it, do not live up to it in their lives: or who had some knowledge of the truth of the divine Being, and his perfections, and of the difference between moral good and evil; but did not like to retain it themselves, nor communicate all they knew to others, nor did they live according to that knowledge which they had.

That which is known about God: There are some things which could not be known of God by the light of nature; as a trinity of persons in the Godhead; the knowledge of God in Christ as Mediator; the God-man and Mediator Jesus Christ; his incarnation, sufferings, death, and resurrection; the will of God to save sinners by a crucified Jesus; but then there are some things which may be known of God, without a revelation. They know that God exists because they see evidence of Him in nature, and they know they need a Savior because their consciences convict them of their sin and their need of Him.

Reprobate mind: people who are classified as having a reprobate mind have some knowledge of God and perhaps know of His commandments. However, they live impure lives and have very little desire to please God. Those who have reprobate minds live corrupt and selfish lives. Sin is justified and acceptable to them.

V1:32 & 2:1: Paul is saying that whenever people pass judgment on someone else, when they say that those who do such things deserve to die, they are guilty of *the same kind of thing* — a sin. We are all guilty of something, so we should not judge other people. If we condemn someone, we are saying that sinners deserve to be punished (1:32). But since *we* have sinned, we also deserve to suffer the unpleasant consequences. But it is true: no one can say that the universe owes them eternal life. If they turn away from the Author and the Giver of life, then it is natural that they would cut themselves off from life.

V2:5-16: Do not misunderstand this to mean people can be saved or not on the basis of good works; no one is good enough to earn eternal life through their works. So the point of all these verses is that Jews as well as Gentiles are liable to judgment, because that judgment will be according to the life we have lived, not according to whether we are Jews or Gentiles.

If that were true then the works that count would be the works of faith, and at the judgment they would be the evidence of saving faith in Christ. And our salvation *would accord with them, but not be based on them.*

None of these texts say that eternal life is earned by or merited by or based on good deeds. They simply say, in effect, that the final verdict of eternal life will accord with good deeds. They go together. And the reason they go together is not that works has replaced faith or that merit has replaced grace, but because the gospel of justification by faith is the power of God unto salvation. The gospel does not come into a life and leave it under the dominion of sin. It comes in the power of the Holy Spirit. And where it is believed, trusted and cherished, it produces what Paul calls "the obedience of faith."

V2:12. "The Law": This expression evidently means without revealed or written law, as the apostle immediately says that they had a law of nature/conscience. The word "law" is often used to denote the revealed Law of God, the Scriptures, or revelation general.

Circumcision: The practice of circumcision was instituted by God as a means of setting apart His people (Gen 17:1-14). In the NT, Peter (one of the twelve apostles) spoke of salvation being by the grace of Jesus and not based on the sign of circumcision. James spoke of God's invitation to Gentiles and saw no need to require them to be circumcised. While physical circumcision is not required for believers, we also do not see that it is condemned.