



Lesson 4 June 25th, 2016

Ignoring God's Plain Truth

Study Scripture – Romans 1:18-23, 28-32

Background Scripture – Romans 1

Key Verse:

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 many are without excuse.

Romans 1:20

INTRODUCTION

We are now looking at a Book which unfolds God's method for man's salvation. It is considered that every great spiritual revival in the church of Jesus Christ has been prompted or "caused" by an exposure to and a deeper understanding of this Book.

We all need a secure place or a structure of truth which lasts without ever changing. We are assured that this is the place to draw sustenance for our daily living, especially if we are working and ministering in a world which is tragically empty of and devoid of truth.

We do not really like to think about often and concern ourselves that while we have security in our knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are surrounded by a world that to its people is quite frightening, uncertain, destabilized, violent, offering no peace and a sure way out of trouble.

Understanding the truths in our Study Scriptures is therefore critically important for it will not only anchor us spiritually, but it will make us a lighthouse and a beacon for truth. This systematic exposition of the faith given by the Lord God is invaluable.

It is therefore necessary that we look at the issue of the trustworthiness of the messenger who brings this astounding "good news" to us and the reliability of his information.

Many believers shy away from announcing this fabulous information to others, and they feel shame for passing on this "good news", though it is the source of life for all men and the only way they can avoid death and enjoy unbelievable blessings. This attitude will be examined.

We might have difficulty understanding why the people we meet seem not to often want to hear or think on the "good news" of the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Text tells us why, for it examines what it is like to be "human". It raises the issue of human denial and the resulting defensiveness when faced with the "truth".

Toward a New Creation – A World Gone Wrong (Unit 2)

It is not an easy matter for persons to come to understand that no matter who they are they need help since they are not good enough to face and succeed in rejecting the delusions of life. We are shown how God overcomes that by His power.

God's simple call is for persons to believe and find common ground in the fact that God does not distinguish between person because of the false divisions of race, ethnic background, age, gender, education, intellectual ability or other ideas that define society's groupings.

To better understand this Letter, we should note that it was written in Corinth about 56-58 A.D. during the Apostle Paul's third missionary journey.

This Greek city was located on a key trading crossroad of the Roman world. It was a notoriously wicked and corrupt city, filled with idolatry, prostitution, sexual perversion, violence, graft, and crookedness of the worst kind. The atmosphere and the human condition described in this letter reflect much of what existed in this city of Corinth. This we know for in the ancient world of that day to be accused of being "corinthianized" was one of the most serious moral insults that could be levelled at a person.

This letter was sent by the hands of Phoebe a servant of the church which was at Cenchrea. She joins the faithful band whose work, though we might not consider simply delivering a letter was that critically important, to have performed an indispensable function from which we all have benefited during the long centuries.

So do not neglect to do what some might consider to be menial tasks. Those simple tasks might be intended by God to save millions of souls. So we salute the work of that dedicated servant of God Phoebe.

Paul tells us of his position. He was a servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, called by God, interrupted in his foul doings by heaven by the sovereign grace of God, and by the initiative of God transformed, turned around.

He was separated to the "***gospel of God***". It was "***good news***", but not new news, for it was promised in the Holy Scriptures and foretold by the Old Testament prophets. It reached its fullest expression and unfolding in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ.

It concerned the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the Father. The Son had "*been made of the seed of David according to the flesh*", "*appointed Son of God with power*", "*according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead*".

This divine being took on human flesh, and was made a unique person. He was the answer to the Old Testament promises for by His death, burial, resurrection, and ascension to the right hand of the Father, He was now the Son of God with power, and mighty, with all things in His hand. One writer therefore concludes because of this:



“He is Lord in the realm of salvation. He said, *“I am the way. I am the truth. I am the life. No man cometh to the Father but by me”*.

He is the exclusive Savior. There is no salvation through any other person or through any other philosophy on the face of this earth. He is the sole Savior of men. He is the one who speaks authoritatively concerning life after death, *“I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me though he were dead yet shall he live, and he that liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Believest thou this?”* He said to Martha”.

The Apostle declared that he was ready to preach this gospel, “for” (the reason given), according to verse 16, he was not ashamed of the gospel.

Why would anyone be ashamed of announcing this great “good news”? One might be ashamed of or feel bad about declaring bad news. If it had embarrassing associations such as talking about an ex-murderer that you knew or someone put in prison for a terrible crime, one could understand that. But if you discovered a remedy for cancer, for example, would you not want to share this news? Consider this personally!

Paul knew that he was called to be Apostle to the Gentiles, and he knew and told the Corinthians that the word of the cross to those who were perishing was foolishness. He knew and the Roman church knew that the men and women of Rome, the intelligentsia who ruled the mightiest empire on the face of the earth were contemptuous of the gospel of Jesus Christ. It was expected that they, the wise and mighty, would dismiss as unacceptable the doctrine of Christ taught by a crucified carpenter, executed on a Roman cross.

But Paul emphasized that he was an authoritative spokesman, called by God, and so he could be trusted. He was not promoting himself for self-aggrandizement or fame, but his message was that spoken by the prophets. Thus his message was based on ancient testimony which had validity, and in addition was verified by the resurrection.

It is not therefore surprising when believers are shy for they think they are alone in their testimony. They fear what society will say, or fear persons around them will simply sneer or scorn them.

We often forget that we have the secret of release that people desperately need. The Apostle has spoken to us of “good news”, news that is so good that we should shout about it. One writer comments:

“Now why was he not ashamed of the gospel? Well, is it because he had extra strong courage naturally? Was he a courageous kind of man? Well, evidently, he was, but that isn’t what he is speaking about here for he goes on to explain why he’s not ashamed. He says, *“For it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth”*.

Why would a person be ashamed of a message by which a person may be saved? Why should he be ashamed of a message which has within its power, the necessary power to bring a man out of darkness into the marvelous light of the knowledge of God?



Why would a person be ashamed of the gospel of Christ? Why should he not want to proclaim it on the house tops? Why should he want to beat around the bush as so many preachers of the gospel do, thinking that they must be tactful about the presentation of the gospel?

This is good news. It's something to shout about and the apostle considers it such good news because,

"It's the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth".

That's why it's good news. We shouldn't be ashamed of it. It's good news".

We should note at this time that the gospel message is a different and unique message for it begins by reminding men about what it means to be human, to be a descendant of Adam and Eve, and thus in rebellion against God.

So the "good news" calls on persons to look at who they really are and understand that they are in denial. They are in a relationship with God but that is a relationship of denial. It is expected that they will as is normal, be defensive for they do not want anybody to uncover their pain.

The gospel message is based on the fact that people instinctively react to protect anyone seeing their failure, and the inadequacy that they have built to defend themselves, and so it calls on them to destroy the denial, and come out of their isolation. It tells that no matter who they are they need help, and that there is some place to which they can go.

This will be hard for many to hear, says Paul. Those who have managed to fight their way to the top and gained power and influence and wealth will resist hearing that their success, wisdom and skills are not in the final analysis really worth much. On the other hand, many of those still struggling to get to the top, or who are simply surviving, might not want to hear the "good news" for it will lead to them discovering what is inside them.

So there is power, power to change and to transform. The gospel is the only thing that supplies the power of God so that a person can become different. God will join us in our heart and change what is inside us so we will become different people.

Paul knew very well that Roman society was full of violence and corruption, and as one writer tells us, the suicide rate was very high. More than half of those in Rome were slaves and life was not very good for the vast majority. The Apostle and the church knew that the powers that were in Rome could not eliminate slavery and the various ills of the society, and that they were powerless to change the stubborn, hostile minds of the people. So the Apostle could state without reservation he was not ashamed of the gospel for only it had power. It had no rival.

The Apostle teaches that all a person has to do is believe. Though the world around them is disintegrating and is becoming difficult, tribalized, and increasingly paranoid, this gift from God is the key to everything. Genesis 15 told of the faith of Abraham and that is the key to living.



Toward a New Creation – A World Gone Wrong (Unit 2)

Scripture reminds us that we do not have any righteousness, but it available to us through what Jesus has done.

THE TEXT

Verse 18. Some messages in the Bible are unpleasant. The Apostle now had to be in some sense unkind by bluntly analyzing human nature from the time of the Fall, telling man the truth about his condition, so that the kindness of God shown by the coming of Jesus Christ would be made plain. The remedy for man is in the saving work of Jesus Christ.

So why are heathens, or people who grew up in Christian homes or often those who were expose to Christianity lost? The answer is stated here. One writer puts it simply: **“Perversion in life stems from perversion in faith, and that’s why faith is so important for us”.**

Faith in God is critical. All have the opportunity to have faith.

In this extensive analysis of the human dilemma, the Apostle tells us about something human beings do not like to hear about for man, ancient and modern do not like to think that he is under the wrath and judgment of God.

Note that this is not that God is vindictive, for the wrath of God rests on two words, **“ungodliness”** and **“unrighteousness”**. These are two religious words.

“Ungodliness” means acting contrary to God. It means concerning oneself with something other than God, in fact, creating an idol. It can be giving ultimate priority to one’s financial state, concern with success, covetousness, or anything else.

This is a foundational position into which a world which is becoming blind and has lost its moral compass, and therefore is behaving foolishly has fallen. This is world of deepening darkness where people think they are in control. This is a world gone wrong.

“Unrighteousness” is a word with moral force and it thus results in immorality. **“Ungodliness”** leads to **“unrighteousness”** and this leads to immorality.

The biblical way therefore is not to stress morality, for that is not the priority. The Ten Commandments accordingly properly placed the instructions in first Table of the Law with the focus on God, for that is the proper order. Then the Second Table of the Law was directed toward man, and human relationships.

The wrath of God therefore is the antagonism of God’s holy love to evil; for God hates sin, and the workers of iniquity. God is holy and when believers begin to be sanctified they too come to the place where they hate sin. That is a sign of the true believer.

The God of heaven therefore has revealed His wrath against the rebellion by the race of men, for it is stated they have deliberately taken the truths of God, and as one writer states



“rejected it, hidden it, denied it, and suppressed it”.

God’s response to this rebellion is wrath. It is not thunder and lightning, fire and brimstone, but it is wrath and it is present now. It is being revealed, and that means it is going on right now. His wrath is everywhere to be seen and cannot be escaped. It comes from the invisible forces working in our lives, and it is seen by the invisible resistance of God to the evils men do.

We experience it every day for even when we celebrate we know there is a bitter-sweet character to life. When we are at home and with friends we have an underlying sense of fear for we know there is a probability that everything can suddenly turn in tragedy and sorrow. In our joy at being together and enjoying each other’s company we know that separation can occur.

The world therefore fights hard to suppress the truth. They prefer to ignore the warning and analysis of Psalm 90:9-11:

*“For all our days pass away under their wrath,
Our years come to an end like a sigh.
The years of our life are threescore and ten,
Or even by reason of strength four-score;
Yet their span is but toil and trouble;
They are soon gone, and we fly away”.*

One writer emphasizes:

“Here we are in a world in which truth from God is breaking all around us, but we are busy covering it up, hiding it, suppressing it, keeping it from being prominent and dominant in our thinking. That’s the picture. Against that attitude of hiding truth, suppressing the truth, the wrath of God burns among the human family. The reason why life has turned tragic in so many cases is because the world is deprived of the truth that is necessary for life and liberty and freedom and godliness, and it is hidden by men and suppressed by them”.

The wrath of God therefore exists, and is shown in the shortness of life, its sorrows, its tragedies, mixed with its joy and gladness. Nobody escapes it and we all have to face up to it.

The ungodliness, the godless attitudes that lead to wicked actions, acting as if God did not exist, with no concern or regard for God, the secular attitude that does not take account of God, and wickedness of men cause God’s wrath.

Verse 19. “Because” men work so hard to suppress the truth of God’s majesty, eternal power, and greatness, which they well know, for God has revealed certain things to man, they are on sinking sand.



Verse 20. God has made plain to man His invisible attributes, and shows His divine nature and power in the created world. There really then are no atheists. When man looks at the vastness and complexity of the heavens, and the

“incredible intricacies of cellular structures that we see under the microscopes”

they know His omnipotence, His Godhood. The Apostle knows and our modern scientists know that the infinitely small things which we know exist are beyond our perception. There are galaxies almost infinitely vast and we can learn from this there is an Infinite, a Supreme Being. God is declaring Himself in all this.

Man has much more knowledge than we like to admit and much more than the dim light of nature is teaching. Man has been endowed with a great deal of knowledge but he has chosen to turn away from what he knows, and had willed and determined to position against the will of God. One writer states:

“One might say, “Does he know enough to be saved?” No. He doesn’t know enough to be saved, but he knows enough to be condemned. And so, God through creation, and through things that we see, has brought men to the state without excuse. And the negative effects of the knowledge of the nature and being of this universe is sufficient to bring men to the status of without excuse before God”.

Verse 21. They knew God. Adam knew God. So did his sons. So did the patriarchs. Job and other men knew God.

The reason for human wickedness is now laid bare. Man has developed a religious form of his own and constructed their own religious history and story. After the Fall man who knew God did not want to glorify God or thank Him and so they created their own version of God. Some called Him “nature”, some “fate” “destiny”, or “karma”. Some call Him “the man upstairs”, or a false version of “providence”. They had no intention to diligently seek God, though everything in life was telling them that God was there.

Note that man has not only been given the Bible of Nature so that he can learn that He is good and is a sovereign Creator, but God has also given man the Bible of conscience. Adam had this and so he and Eve ran and hid from God in the Garden of Eden after they had sinned. The brothers of Joseph heard from their conscience when they were distressed on their visit to Egypt, and not realizing that Joseph was listening to and understood them, they admitted their guilt.

But despite those provisions man was not prepared to pay attention to the written Word of Scripture. They still rejected God, turning to their imagination. So their thinking became foolish and futile, and therefore all their programs and rules to help them would inevitable come to nothing. That is the history of the world. There are always new or different procedures, plans, and philosophies, but none have worked to alleviate or to stop violence, poverty and suffering



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Their hearts became **darkened**. With that they did not pity those with severe human needs. The world has lost compassion, and though they are aware of the struggles of others, there is no significant help. There are promises when there are disasters, and some help, but the massive help needed is rarely forthcoming without those people paying a heavy price to those who help.

Verse 22. When they ignore God, man used the technique of claiming to be wise. They claim to know everything or be capable to know everything, and to run anything. When we read the intellectual journals and the Science journals men appears to have mastered the art of making relatively simple discoveries sound impressive and amazing. A space craft circling a distant moon or asteroid is made to sound that man has done something parallel to creation of the universe. They hardly ever admit that they are making only tiny steps which in the grand scheme of things, and given the massive nature of the universe amount to very little.

History has denied this ability of man to know everything or to be able to run anything, but man persists in this idea which is really folly. They constantly try to mislead the people into believing progress though real, is massive. Man therefore became fools.

Verse 23. In denying the truth of God, the rebel race has exchanged the glory of God for an image made like men who get weak and die, to impotent birds, reptiles, and animals.

Note carefully that instead of going upwards, man has been going downwards. The effects of the descent into sin are startling. They had been given the opportunity to worship the infinite, omnipotent, loving, kind, merciful, glorious, beautiful God.

Then they chose to begin to worship men. Older civilizations made idols resembling strong muscular human beings, and they worshipped those. Then the slide continued and man made and worshipped gods resembling four-footed domesticated animals like cows. Then they began to create idols with figures like reptiles, snakes, and crawling creatures.

Nowadays some still have these older forms of idols. But in the Western world we are a little different. One writer describes:

“Today, we don’t worship animals, but we tend to worship impersonal forces and technology as a replacement for real human beings (who have replaced God) as the idols who will meet our needs. Many of our contemporaries think, “I’ll harness the forces of nature and invent something that will change the world”. Silicon Valley is famous world wide as a Mecca for those who believe this way. And the sad thing is that we’re raising children in this country who are ill-equipped even for that technological world. We’ve lost the ability to teach and inspire them to learn even that much, and what they worship now is more likely to be guns than anything else.

The descent from God to man to four-footed animals to snakes is very similar to the descent from God to man to technology to weapons- violent authority that is based on nothing more



than terror and guns...And we say, “How can this happen?” By exchanging the worship of God for the worship of something less than God”.

David in Psalm 8:3-9 told us how to look at the majesty and glory of God and the heavens and earth He has made.

*“When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visiteth him? ...
O Lord our God, how excellent is thy name in all the earth*

Verses 24-27. As a result of this rebellion which has led to a great departure from what God originally intended for man, Paul tells us that all the perversions of life can be traced to this perversion of faith leading to corruption would have to follow any departure from God.

“Wherefore” connects these verses to the rebellion and something followed. Three time in verses 24 and 25 the Apostle tells us God has “given up”, “handed over”, “given over” man to vile passions and lastly to a reprobate mind. The verbs used are ‘active verbs’. This means God has connected apostasy and its consequences by personally carrying out the judgments.

It is not that He had simply ‘permitted’ men to carry out their sinful acts and they consequently suffer, or that He has ‘withdrawn’ His hand from restraining evil. One writer explains:

“Most commentators have come to the conclusion that we must give this word here a judicial sense. That is, God positively gave men over to the judgment of a more intensified cultivation of the lusts with which they are afflicted and with the consequence, that there was a greater toll of divine retributive judgment. That is, he gave them over to uncleanness. He gave them over to vile affections. He gave them over to a reprobate mind. And in that positive act of judicial judgment men were given to the consequences of their own sin by God himself”.

The Apostle now moves to the sin of homosexuality into man and woman has fallen. These unnatural relationships are contrary to God’s order and man and woman indulge in these acts for they are given to reprobate minds.

Verse 28. The awful conclusion is that they, men and women, are now controlled by reprobate or depraved minds, and since they have rejected God, they have no guidance in moral thoughts on how to live.

The word “reprobate” means “that which has not stood the test”. Like coins that are fake and below standards and rejected, so was man.

Verses 29-32. The lists describe the sins of the pagan community in Corinth and elsewhere. The lists include a wide range of sins which reflect a debased mind. The men are spiritually mad. These people are covetous and always wanting more. They are whisperers, secret detractor,



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who are always carrying tales about others. They are envious. Pilate knew the Jews had brought Jesus to him for trial because of envy. These men are similarly full of envy. They were proud, continually magnifying themselves and making themselves better than they were.

But they were also murderers, deceitful, disobedient to parents, covenant breakers, as well as other sins that even the pagans considered to be socially repugnant.

They knew that God disapproved of these ungodly and unrighteous things, but they persisted in them. They no longer cared to follow the ways of God and did not care that the wages of sin was death.

CONCLUSION

Can God really give a man over? The answer is Yes. God is holy, righteous, and just and so He does give a man over when he rejects God and has a reprobate mind.

But does He care for us? Yes, He does. He at great cost to Himself sent His Beloved Son to the Cross. He does care for He gave man the gift of His Son Jesus Christ

We need to be reminded that ignoring God's plain truths means you are already under judgment. You are lost.

But any person, though guilty of vile sins, can receive forgiveness of sins and be delivered because of the merit of Jesus Christ which are imputed to the repentant who come to faith in Jesus Christ.

So we must invite all those who have ignored the truths of God to make the simple decision to thank God for revealing their lost condition, and ask Him to remove them from His wrath and condemnation. That is the message of "good news".

So we ask that you cease ignoring God's plain truth. We must carry this message to this lost world.

