

Text: Romans 1:18-32

Ser# 5388

Title: The sin, guilt, and condemnation of the Gentile world (1)

Date: November 21, 2010 **Group:** Romans: The Gospel of the Righteousness of God

Sermon Type: Expository Sermon

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Fallen Condition Focus: Men universally reject the light of God given to them.

Propositional Statement: Since all men are under God's condemnation, you need the righteousness of God which is received by faith.

Introduction:

1. When I was young I used to enjoy watching Perry Mason on television. Perry Mason was a lawyer who was the nemesis of criminals and the friend of those who were falsely accused. When he cross-examined a witness on the stand he would carefully sift the evidence and point out the inconsistencies in their statements. Then he would produce his own evidence and prove the criminal guilty.
2. The book of Romans develops like a court-room drama. In the first scene we see the accused on the witness stand. God is the righteous judge who brings his case against sinful men and shows that they are unrighteous; he proves that they are guilty and must receive the punishment that their crime deserves.
3. But then something unexpected happens. God, the Judge, provides his own Son as a substitute to suffer punishment in their place. He offers to give his own righteousness freely to those who are unrighteous. The only condition is that they must receive this righteousness by faith alone.
4. In the text we are considering today, the curtain rises on the first act in this drama. Here Paul presents God's case against mankind in general and against every man in particular.

I. You need the righteousness of God by faith because all men are without excuse for their sin. (18-20)

A. Men attempt to suppress the truth about God. (18)

1. "For the wrath of God is revealed" **Explanation:** This parallels v. 17, "for therein [in the gospel] is the righteousness of God revealed." We need the revelation of God's righteousness in the Gospel because God has revealed his wrath against human sin. The Gospel of God's righteousness is the answer to the problem of man's sin. v. 18 introduces the first of four main sections of the book Romans:
 - a. 1:18-4:25 The heart of the Gospel: Justification by faith.
 - b. 5:1-8:39 The hope of the Gospel: Assurance of the believer
 - c. 9:1-11:36 The defense of the Gospel: The unbelief of Israel
 - d. 12:1-15:13 The power of the Gospel: Duties of the believer
2. The first section, the heart of the gospel, is further divided:
 - a. 1:18-3:20 The universal reign of sin

b. 3:21-4:25 Justification by faith

c. **Argumentation:** (1) “God's wrath is being revealed” is the heading for 1:18-3:20. In this section Paul is proving that ALL MEN are sinners and therefore need to receive God's righteousness by faith. The message about man's sinfulness is not “good news,” but it is necessary to the gospel. Only those who clearly understand their condition and need can appreciate the gospel message. (2) He begins this argument by showing the sinfulness of the Gentiles, that is those who have not received God's special revelation in the Mosaic Law.

(1) 1:18-32 the guilt and condemnation of the Gentiles

(2) 2:1-16 the guilt and condemnation of the moral critic (Jews)

(3) 2:17-3:20 the guilt and condemnation of the Jew

3. “against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men” **Explanation:** The wrath of God is His holy attitude of judicial condemnation against man because of his sin. It is not a feeling of anger or a temper tantrum, but is rather the righteous response of a holy God to sin. If God was not angry over sin he would not be a righteous God.
4. “who hold the truth in unrighteousness” **Explanation:** better, 'who attempt to suppress the truth...' Men try to ignore or deny the truth which God himself has revealed. Men therefore increase their guilt by suppression of the truth. **Illustration:** Like a cruel dictator who muzzles the press from reporting the truth about his evil deeds, every man is a petty tyrant who attempts to suppress the truth because it exposes his of sin.

B. God reveals himself to all men in Creation. (19-20)

1. **Argumentation:** vv. 19-20 describe exactly what this “truth” is that men suppress. God has revealed himself in Creation so that every man has a clear perception of God's existence and nature. There are several words in these verses which strongly emphasize man's ability to know God: (1) revealed, (2) truth, (3) things which may be known of God, (4) manifest-2X, (5) understood, and (6) clearly seen. Therefore, no one can claim ignorance about God as an excuse for his sin. Men sin willfully against the knowledge that they actually possess about God.
2. “that which may be known of God” **Explanation:** Paul affirms that there are facts about God's existence and nature which may be known through God's act of revelation to all men in nature. **Argumentation:** Theologians describe two types of revelation which God has provided for us. (1) First, *General Revelation* or *Natural Revelation* is the revelation which God has given about himself in his created works. (2) Second, *Special Revelation* is the Word of God, both the written Word (the Bible) and the living Word (Jesus Christ).
3. “for the invisible things ... are clearly seen” **Explanation:** This is an oxymoron. It states that the physical creation provides unmistakable evidence and information about the invisible God, which every individual

can and does observe and know.

4. “being understood by the things that are made” **Explanation:** (1) This knowledge is a rational and objective knowledge in the mind of man. This indicates the rational nature of truth. When people reject and deny the knowledge of God they must deny the rational evidence of their own senses as well as the reasonable knowledge it produces. The truth will then be replaced with irrational and senseless ideas that have no foundation in reality. This is why the Bible says, “The fool hath said in his heart, 'There is no God,'” Ps. 14:1. (2) Human beings are capable of receiving and interpreting this revelation about God because man was created in the image of God (Gen 1:27). *This image of God equips man to (a) know God, (b) communicate with God, and (c) have a relationship with Him.* **Illustration:** Like a radio is made to receive radio transmissions, man was made to interpret God's revelation of himself in Creation.
5. “his eternal power and godhead” **Explanation:** Two facts about God in particular are revealed in Creation. (1) eternal power is the infinite greatness of God which fashioned the vast universe and rules over it. (2) Godhead is the nature of deity. God's wisdom, eternity, and spirituality are positively indicated in the physical works of Creation. **Argumentation:** We must recognize that God's revelation in nature is a true revelation, but it is also a limited revelation. It is sufficient to tell us that God exists and that he is Creator, Ruler, and Judge, but it is not sufficient to give us the knowledge of salvation. Only God's special revelation can show us the way of salvation.
6. “so that they are without excuse” **Explanation:** God's revelation of himself in Creation leaves man without excuse for his sin. The universal result of this general revelation is condemnation. **Argumentation:** General revelation is not sufficient to lead a man to salvation, because men are sinful and pervert this knowledge. This is why we need the Gospel. The Gospel is God's special revelation in Christ, who died on the cross for sins. The Gospel is God's power unto salvation to everyone that believes (v. 16). (1) This is the answer to the question of those who have never heard. Because they have the light of Creation, they stand condemned before God and without excuse. But we have the message of salvation which can “turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God” (Acts 26:18). This is why we must “Go . . . into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature” (Mark 16:15).

- II. You need the righteousness of God by faith because God has judicially delivered men over to the moral consequences of their rejection of Him. (21-32)
 - A. This is evident in men's exchange of God's glory for idols. (21-24)
 - B. This is evident in men's exchange of God's truth for the lie. (25-26)
 - C. This is evident in men's exchange of natural sex for unnatural sex. (27-31)
 - D. This is evident in men's settled disposition of rebellion. (32)

Conclusion:

1.