

Romans 1:18-32

“The Devolution of Man”

4/25/12

Introduction

- It is helpful to remember the content of the book of Romans by comparing it to a great theological city

The Book of Romans – The Great Theological City

#1 – The Courthouse – Romans 1-5

- Paul introduces the concept of righteousness by faith, but in order to show us our great need of salvation he spend the first five chapters showing are we are all guilty before God

#2 – The Power Plant – Romans 6-8

- Chapters 6-8 help us understand that is power to live out this Christian life God is calling us to – Pastor Rob is doing an in-depth series from these three chapters on our weekend services, but we will cover them as well, just at a much more rapid pace

#3 – The Synagogue – Romans 9-11

- in chapters 9-11 Paul shares with us how Israel fits into God plan now that there is this new thing called the church and answers the questions, has the church replaced Israel, where do they fit into God’s plan and how does God’s sovereignty fit with man’s free will – great stuff in this section

#4 – The Church – Romans 12-16

- in Paul’s final section of this book we will study how the church is practically suppose to operate in light of the all the amazing truths about God is this book – Paul ends all of his letters very practically Romans is no exception

So last week we kind of rushed through the last point, Paul motive for writing. The motive? - That He loved this church so much, a love that came from his prayer life for them

- and also, his motive was not just a love for the people but a love for a message
 - the power of God

What we rushed through was the message was as seen in verse 16-17 and it is where I would like to jump off tonight

- Paul says, I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ for it is the power of God
 - Notice it is not the gospel talks about the power of God
 - Paul is saying, it is the power of God
- The Gospel has the power to make crooked men straight
 - Drunk men sober
 - Perverted men pure
- The Gospel has that power!
 - Because the Gospel is just good advice and some good things to do – it is proclamation, a proclamation Paul declares in verse 17
 - Read the verse again

And in it “The Righteousness of God or literally from God was revealed...”

- Paul expands on this idea in II Corinthians 5:21

“For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.” – II Corinthians 5:21

- On the cross God poured out all of the sin of mankind on him. – God treated him like he lived my life of failure, your life of failure, and every lowlife’s life of failure.

But also is this verse we have the reason God did it.

- That God might give us his righteousness, his life, He treated Jesus on the cross as if He had lived your life, so that he could treat you as if you had lived his

It is a righteousness that is from God to you

- God no longer looks at you as you are
- He looks at you covered in His righteousness
 - Paul says, “I am not ashamed”, **I love this message**

For in it, (the gospel), is the power of God

In it, we learn about the righteousness that comes from God.

- And how is this righteousness from God revealed – Paul tells us...
 - From faith to faith
 - The wording has the idea of continuing

It takes faith at the beginning

- God I am going to trust you, that I am saved by your finished work on the cross
 - You receive that by faith
 - and as you do – God gives you his righteousness
- But don't stop there at the moment of salvation

It takes faith all the way through

- To realize as I am growing and maturing, Lord it is still about you, it is still about how much you love me and the righteousness you have given me
 - The just shall live by faith
 - It is what makes this so great a salvation

But now that we understand that, it is time tonight to enter for the first time into the courthouse. This section is critical to our understanding of the rest of the book – Why???

- because without seeing how lost we are, we won't be able to see our need for a savior

You know maybe you've seen these detective, solve the crime sort of shows – where they bring the suspect in and he's so cool, until presented with the evidence – then – “I need a lawyer”

We do not understand how much we need Jesus, until He brings our hearts and our minds before His Court – and we see guilty!!!!

- The other reason this opening section is so important is once we realize how guilty we really are, then what God has given us becomes even more precious
 - **For those of you who have done some shopping for diamond jewelry you will notice that they put the diamond ring or necklace on a black or some type of dark velvet – why – because they contrast makes the diamond shine even more**

And this is what Paul is doing

- He wants to share with us the riches of what God has done in justifying us, sanctifying us, glorifying us one day in heaven
 - Yet before He does, He gets us to see, how it is truly a blessing I have a relationship with God
 - I see that – because I see what it would have been like without Him

So we enter the courthouse, where the lives of all men, no matter their background or upbringing, are examined, and with each the group the verdict is the same – Guilty as charged!!!

- as we consider this section over the next three week we are going to see everyone is guilty

Romans 1:18-3:20 – Everyone is Guilty!

#1 - The Heathen is guilty – Romans 1:18-32

#2 - The Jew is guilty – Romans 2:1-3:8

#3 - The Whole World is guilty – Romans 3:9-20

- and we will consider each of those sections one week at a time, starting tonight with the Heathen

The Heathen is guilty – Romans 1:18-32

- So often we hear well what about those that have never heard the gospel
 - What about those who have not had religious training growing up
 - How can they be guilty before God?
 - And that is a good question

As we talked about in the book of Revelation, when someone asks me that question the first place I go in Revelation 19:2

- because Revelation 19:2 foretells of a time when you and I are in heaven, with a great multitude of people
 - and when we begin to see how God is going to judge, why He is going to judge, what criteria
 - you and I are going to say “righteous and true are your judgments oh God”
- in other words, what I try to explain to people that say, what about the aborigine, what about the baby that dies before he or she can make a decision for Jesus - what about those that lived in the centuries before Christ???

I say to those folks quite honestly, I don't know

- I don't – I have some ideas, I have some theology, but friends when you are talking to an unbeliever, it can be much simpler than, well the age of accountability, where that is in scripture, ah...
 - And the general revelation of God...
 - The what??? - Listen much simpler

I don't know – because you don't, but here is what I do know, one day in heaven, you and I, if your there, because I do know about you, you and I are going to say – right on God

- What you did with the man that lived before Christ, how you evaluated lives the never truly go to be lived, how you dealt with the guy in the jungle – right on!

In other words when you get to heaven you will be saying – oh wow I totally disagree, God you are cold hearted killer

- don't get Him upset – cranky God
 - no way – you and I will see how He does it, what He basis it on and we will say
 - oh God you are so smart, so right on, that is perfectly justifiable

I tell folks, but if they press me and say, well that doesn't make sense, how will God evaluate someone...

- I then go to where we are at here in Romans 1, and this is where the theology of it comes in
 - What we see here in these verses is how the heathen, the one we would say didn't really know God, how they are guilty before God totally and completely

Because Paul in this passage totally contradicts the teaching of evolution that man is just better and better, every year we are progressing as a people

- the reality is friends, man is regressing
 - and you could title this section in your Bible the devolution of man
 - as Paul lays out a 4 stop slide of you note takers tonight, as man slides away from knowledge of God into the deepest of depravity of sin

The 4 Step Devolution of Man – Romans 1:18-32

#1 – Man Sees the truth – Romans 1:18-20

#2 – Man Suppresses the Truth – Romans 1:21

#3 – Man Substitutes the Truth – Romans 1:22-25

#4 – Man Sins against the Truth – Romans 1:26-32

- Tonight is brought to you by the letter S –soooooo - lets look at them one at a time...

The 4 Step Devolution of Man – Romans 1:18-32

#1 – Man Sees the truth – Romans 1:18-20

- Paul say the “wrath of God” is revealed from heaven
 - Meaning God is explaining why His wrath is totally justified and acceptable and doesn’t contradict His nature at all

There are many Greek words translated “Wrath or Anger in the Bible”

- One is Thermos, and it means an eruption of anger
 - Maybe growing up you Mom or Dad would be patient and patient and patient, but then you did something to push them over the edge and they went crazy on you – that is one Greek Word – but its not this one
- But this word means a anger that is thought through, justifiable – has a real reason for it
 - You know when you turn on the evening news and you see the evidence mount for someone that has hurt a child, you are rightfully upset
 - Hey the evidence is in, you did this – that is not right – you are upset
- That is the Word here, man has done something to earn this
 - And it take a lot
 - Again in Revelation chapter 6 we are told the wrath of God is the Wrath of the Lamb and that expression always bring a smile to my face
- What do you have to do to get a lamb angry
 - How bad to you have to be
 - Its that same idea
 - Man has earned this – how
 - Well Paul tells us

Man started off with a knowledge of God, I know that is not what sociology classes say, but that is what the Word says – man started off knowing God

And God continues to make it clear, Paul says through nature

- Just in the clear design of it all God is saying, Something is out here greater than you , hello
 - I mean – no one could convince me that my smart phone with all its ability, amazing, I don’t know how we did life without these things – you think I am bad at sending emails back now – you should seen me before the smart phone
- Its ability to coordinate date, to tell time and I think they even work to call one another, but in the age of texting, I not sure if my phone does that – but this amazing device, no one would believe that it was the result of an explosion, putting together the proper parts and timing – no way – it clearly Steve jobs was involved

Well Paul is saying if someone is honest about what is clearly before their eyes, our bodies can do vastly more – Lets be honest Seri is not as helpful as the comical portrays – “God dinning in San Diego, “You wan to die in San Diego?” – Not today Seri, are there any good places to eat in Downtown – You want to know how to beat James Brown – but we almost accept it, because no it’s a machine, but I would have locked up if that was how you were responding to my conversation with you

- the clear conclusion, if someone smart made Seri, then someone lot smarter had to make Sarah, you see
 - and it not just humans

Consider the bombardier beetle, which produces four chemicals in its body. Two of them are toxic, flammable, highly explosive when mixed with each other, and they are in his body. But Mr. Bombardier beetle doesn't explode, instead he produces a third chemical that mixes with the other two and neutralizes it – so no accidents occur. But the beetle still wants the ability to shoot fire from its backside, so in its body mixes the three chemicals, and then just as the mix is leaving the body a fourth chemical is produced which neutralizes the third and an explosion occurs.

Now the discovery channel makes the statement “what a wonder of evolution”

- But I wonder – How did that develop over time?
 - How many little bugs were blowing up all over the place until mother nature got it right

We are told Giraffes, evolved a long neck in order not to starve

- What??? – what did they eat before they developed there long necks
 - And of course they have a special valve that controls blood flow – if you and I had the long of neck, when we stood straight we would pass out because our hearts can't pump blood that far straight, and if without the valve when they bent down, it would explode their head – how long did that take to evolve
 - Man lost one – Earl the giraffes, I hope nature gets this valve down soon – what???
- How many flying squirrels plummet to their deaths – before they realized they needed to develop a flap of skin to fly?

And that is just animals – when you consider that These are not new thoughts. – when Napoleon was out in the field with his troops. Some of them were mentioning the possibility of their being no god. Napoleon pointed up to the stars and said, “If you are going to get ride of God, you need to get ride of these”

It is clearly seen that there is something out there greater than ourselves

- In fact it takes greater faith to believe this is all just some coincidence than it does to believe God created the heavens and the earth

But friends Paul takes it even further than what is just clearly seen in nature

- Paul is verse 19 that there is evidence “in them”

There is something inside us that testifies of God, something that we know there is something more, something that seems to define right from wrong

- and because of this, this is why Paul says, man is without excuse
 - this is important to consider – for some of our brothers and sister in Christ teach that man is not responsible
 - that man has no way to respond to God in our lives
 - and we will talk about that a bunch as we go through this book of Romans
- but right here we see, and I don't know how it all works out, one day, I will agree God is right on in His dealings
 - I don't know how it all works out

But we see here, God is revealing Himself to all men, not just some, to all men through nature, through something inside them, saying you are not okay, and you need a savior

- God is doing this to such an extent that man is without excuse the Word says before God
 - We have no excuse to not respond to God
 - But then the questions remain if man can clearly see that there is a God, and the evidence is even within them, why isn't everybody saved?
- Because of the second step of devolution

The 4 Step Devolution of Man – Romans 1:18-32

#1 – Man Sees the truth – Romans 1:18-20

#2 – Man Suppresses the Truth – Romans 1:21

- verse 21 says, as the slide continues, Man begins by seeing clearly but then Man suppresses the truth
 - God does all He can to reveal Himself to man, even the man who doesn't not grow up with religious training, with a Christian background

The problem is not with God failing to reveal the truth to man, the problem exists in man suppressing the truth that they know in their hearts to be real

- The idea of the word “suppress” is not passive, it means to actively hold down
 - Like the idea of a young boy hiding a puppy from Mom and Dad, I don't have anything in this box, as he holds down the lid

God has made it plain – the idea of the term there is God has given to everyone, what they need to know right now

- I'm not saying that from looking into the stars you can discern the substitutionary death of Christ
 - But apparently you can realize, there is a God, I'm not him and I know I need him
- But what man does is suppresses that, holds it down and what happens when that activity is not repented of, well Paul says, “their foolish hearts were darkened”
 - And understand Bible students, when Paul says “heart” here in the text, he is not just referring to the emotional center of our lives, but every part of our lives
 - its not just our moral judgment that suffers when we hold down the truth of God, but the heart refers to everything in this context, our intellect and reasoning begins to suffer
- Man does not want to be accountable to God
 - Because if I give in to this witness of nature and this witness within
 - Well then I am accountable to live the way God is telling me – and man does want to
 - So the truth is suppressed and even our intellects become dark and damaged
 - But then it gets worse

The 4 Step Devolution of Man – Romans 1:18-32

#1 – Man Sees the truth – Romans 1:18-20

#2 – Man Suppresses the Truth – Romans 1:21

#3 – Man Substitutes the Truth – Romans 1:22-25

- you see although man kind has suppressed the truth and has chosen not to worship God, not to honor Him with their lives
 - the problem is man has been created to worship, and if you will not worship God you will worship something in His place
 - that is essential what Idolatry is – when I worship something or someone instead of God
- Our as Paul says here, when I begin to worship the creature or the creation, rather than the creator Himself

And this is a problem precious ones – You have been made to worship

- and if you will not worship God, who created you
 - you will worship something
 - but the problem with worship creation or created things
 - the problem with idolatry is the lie
- What do I mean

- Well when we are commanded to worship God –the promise is in His presence is fullness of joy, at His right hand are pleasures forever more
- That is the promise – not that your life won't have problems, but that you now have a source of life like nothing else
- And those of us who are worshippers of God, and I mean by that, not just those of us who sing songs to God, but worship God with our lives, surrendering to Him
 - We know what God has promised is absolutely true – it is truth

Idolatry exchanges the truth of God for a lie

- instead of becoming a different man or a different women by the Spirit of God
 - some turn to the idol alcohol – which promises to bring you joy, to give you an escape from your problems
 - and like any sin it delivers for a time – that is until it is poised to destroy your life – like it destroyed the life of my father and my family early on in my life
 - Alcohol are drugs are a lie that will destroy you

Instead of finding the greatest intimacy in God as a single person or intimacy with one person who is your husband or your wife

- the idol of sexual sin says – I will bring you real excitement, I will really set you free
 - and the world says – you puritan – every culture before us explored their sexuality – pornography hurts no one
 - Friend – lie, the idol lies
- When are beginning to discover that something happens in your brain as you experience physical intimacy
 - Pathways are developed in your brain, you are actually altered by the experience
 - It is why Sex is God's gift to the married couple, not just to produce children, but to bind them together as one

But the problem is those same pathways are developed if you choose to sin

- pathways saying – this is how I find joy with this person, not my spouse, that relationship ends and to connect with your spouse become difficult if not impossible
 - you choose to go down the idol of pornography

And what scientific studies are showing is your brain changes what it perceives as intimacy

- and though you think you are hurting no one
 - you are hurting yourself and the ability to connect intimately with your wife or husband
- In fact John Mayer, the musicians, that is just beloved by many of young men and women in this church, (or he is just so talented, to listen to what pours out of his heart, I'm sure doesn't effect me in any way) well he just said in an interview that is he is so addicted to pornography, he prefers that now to intimacy with a women
 - Tell me the idol doesn't lie

Any idol, anything we sinfully peruse after, promises one thing, but in reality it is a lie

- and some of you tonight, need to hear the Word of God to you
 - and repent
 - because your theology can still conquer your biology
 - the power of God is not lessened because of your stupidity
- but you need to repent and come to Him for cleansing
 - because friend, listen to me, ah listen to me
 - if you don't repent, its not going to get better
 - no instead the slide the will continue

- because it is an easy jump from idolatry to full blown immorality

The 4 Step Devolution of Man – Romans 1:18-32

#1 – Man Sees the truth – Romans 1:18-20

#2 – Man Suppresses the Truth – Romans 1:21

#3 – Man Substitutes the Truth – Romans 1:22-25

#4 – Man Sins against the Truth – Romans 1:26-32

Man starts out seeing clearly – but then suppresses the truth, substitutes the truth and the result every, every time – is sin

God gives the heathen over to sin and the effects upon his lifestyle and body are devastating

Paul specifically mentions various forms of Homosexuality being the ultimate expression of this and what you understand why that is

- You Bible students know sin is sin
 - God is not more grieved at homosexuals than he is at heterosexuals who are fornicating or adulterating
 - In fact I believe Homosexuality is so rampant and accepted today because of heterosexual unwillingness to do things God's way
- We have no moral high ground to tell a homosexual not to give in to the lusts of their flesh, if we are not willing to give into the lusts of our flesh
 - Do you see what I mean
 - Because do not be mistaken – it is the height of hypocrisy to look judgmentally at a man that is having sex with another man and tell him – you are offense to God, when you are breaking you are just as equally offensive in breaking the heart of God by breaking your marriage covenant with another women or another man
 - Sin is sin and its all offensive to God and needs to be repented of and receive the forgiveness Jesus paid for on the cross

But Homosexual is called out in Romans 1 because it example of the depth of depravity man will go to, because homosexuality is not just a sin again God, as Paul is here it is a sin against nature – nature tells it's not right

And why that is important

- again, my heart is not to come down on homosexuals tonight
 - my sin of coveting and every other ugly thing in my heart is just as evil as your sin
- but the problem with homosexuality and why the Bible calls it out - is once a society accepts not just sins against God, but sins against nature, is then there is nothing society won't justify and that is when the end is near for a society as was true for the Greeks, true for the Romans, and it will be true for us

And God, who loves you, if you find yourself there, wants you to repent, because like every other sin, you are hurting yourself

- Do you realize the Average life span of a Homosexual male is 40 years – normal men in USA have a life expectancy of 76, in other words you cut off 36 years – and God who loves you, wants you to enjoy life to the fullest
 - He is not angry, He loves you
 - Well That is because of AIDS – no that is without AIDS – when AIDS is introduced the average life span is 36
 - Friends again....
 - Sin is not bad because it is forbidden, it is forbidden because it is bad

- But I'm born with it
 - No we could argue that point – but I will even concede it to you
 - However friend there are those born with a propensity to violence, to drug abuse, to sexual deviancy
 - But we have a choice to give into the flesh or be born again by the Spirit

But so often no matter what your deal is, no matter what you sin is, and there are many listed at the end of chapter one here

- we give in, we sin
 - it effects who we are
 - and then most of us blame God for the effect
- I love the irony – we blame God for our problems – How come God allows this disease, how come God allows people to treat each other that way
 - Friends it is not God's fault

My first laptop was an older Dell lap top. Everything was saved on it. It was wonderful!!! Until my daughter, Haley used it as a trampoline. Now in her defense, I left it on the ground – Bad. But I come into the room and she is saying, “Dad, look at this – in the air, coming down on the computer, I am saying in slow motion – Noooooooo... Needless to say – it didn't work anymore

- But that is not Dell's fault – it was being used in a way, in which it was not designed.

And friends it is not just activity participating in sin

- Romans 1 indicates it is also approving of those who do as well are guilty
 - Why is this so important? – Because, oh listen to me, because, oh parents hear this, because, grandparents hear this, because, young men and women hear this.

If Satan can get you to laugh at things you think you would never do, your defenses begin to wane

- Then someday your unwitting approval may lead to action
 - We need to be careful what we watch and approve of

They end result of this slide is sin, all types of sin

- and to deal with sin we must first recognize it as such
 - it is not a sickness
 - it is not a disease
 - I know that is the politically correct terms

And you maybe pre disposed to the sin of Alcohol abuse or fornication or homosexuality

- But even though you may be pre disposed, it is still a sin
 - And friends, don't buck against that - This is really good news, because so often with sickness there is no cure
 - Where as there is an answer to sin
 - Paul says in I Corinthians 6:9-11

“Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.” – I Corinthians 6:9-11

- Paul goes through this list of sin and then He says such were some of you
 - Sin can be overcome
 - How???
- Well first of all to realize the blessing of obedience

Maybe end with R. Kent Hughes rendering – His commentary on Romans page 41

- To that I say – Amen - lets go that route instead of the devolution of man

- sin brings pain and sadness
- obedience brings joy

God designed you and me to be in fellowship with Him, and when we reject it, there is no end to the sin we can be involved in

- and this passage does not show the fault of God, not doing enough to prevent that in our lives
 - it shows the exact opposite

That man has been given every opportunity to see God and respond to God – yet Man decides to suppress the truth, substitute the truth and sin in their lives

- And because of that Man, even though with no religious background, even the heathen – guilty before God!!!!
 - Let learn from this
 - And turn to the Lord with all our hearts!