

(Through the Bible) Romans 1-2

by Chuck Smith

Chuck Smith's sermon on Romans 1-2 emphasizes the righteousness of God, the importance of faith, and the call to live out one's faith in community.

Duration: 1:22:54

Scripture: Matthew 5:20-22, Matthew 5:27-28, Acts 9:3-6, Romans 1:1, Romans 2:17-24, Philippians 3:7-8

Topics: "Through The Bible"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker discusses the background that Paul paints in chapters 1 and 2 of Romans, setting the stage for the glorious grace of God revealed through Jesus Christ. The sinning world is deserving of God's wrath, but through Jesus, we are offered a place of fellowship and eternal life with God. The speaker emphasizes the importance of recognizing and glorifying God as the creator, as opposed to becoming vain and foolish in our own imaginations. He also challenges the audience to examine their own enjoyment of sinful behaviors, such as watching soap operas or x-rated movies, and questions whether they are taking pleasure in those who do them.

Transcript

This time let's turn to our Bibles, to Romans chapter 1, and Paul opens his epistle to the Romans by declaring, Paul, a bondsman of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated under the gospel of God. Twenty-five years before Paul wrote this epistle to the Romans, he was on the road to Damascus to imprison the Christians there, when suddenly about noon there came a light brighter than the midday sun, and there the Lord said, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And he answered, Who art thou, Lord, that I might serve thee? Now, twenty-five years later Paul writes, Paul, a servant or a bondsman of Jesus Christ. Writing to the Philippian church concerning that same conversion experience, he said, Those things which were gained to me, I count a loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Jesus Christ, for whom I suffer the loss of all things, and do count them but refuse that I may know him.

What I'm seeking to point out is that the commitment that Paul had made twenty-five years earlier was still being honored. There are a lot of people who talk about past experiences, but the past experiences have not been translated into the present relationship, and thus past experiences become null and void unless they are translated into my present relationship. Those things which were gained to me, I counted loss twenty-five years ago.

Yea, doubtless, I do count them. You see, it's still going on. So past experience is only valid as it is translated into my present walk and relationship.

Twenty-five years ago, who art thou, Lord, that I may serve thee? Now, twenty-five years later, Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ. We just finished the book of Acts, and to help place the book of Romans, the writing of the book of Romans, into the study that we just had in Acts. If you will remember, when Paul was in Ephesus and Demetrius, the silversmith created the big ruckus, you know, and they brought all of the people of the city into the arena, and they were chanting, Great is Diana of the Ephesians, and so forth.

And how that at that point Paul said, well, I'm going to go to Macedonia and to Corinth, and then I'm going to go to Jerusalem, and I must also see Rome. So there Paul expressed his desire as he left Ephesus, going over to Macedonia and then to Corinth, to ultimately go on to Rome. I must also see Rome.

And when he got to Corinth, before going back to Jerusalem, it was from Corinth that Paul wrote this letter to the church in Rome. And so that will help you place it historically in the book of Acts. He wrote the letter to the church in Rome from Corinth, as he got ready to leave Corinth to go back to Jerusalem, he found out that there was an assassination plot against him.

They were going to throw him overboard. And so instead of taking a ship from Corinth, he went on back up north to Macedonia, crossed over to Troas, and then made his way around the coast catching ships back to Jerusalem. He gave up his hope of being there for Passover and intended to be there for the Feast of Pentecost.

In Jerusalem, he was arrested, taken to Caesarea, held in prison for two years. He appealed unto Caesar. And now, of course, in the book of Acts, he was finally going to Rome.

But this was written some two years, a little more than two years before Paul was able to go to Rome. And he is going to, in a little bit, express his desire to come to Rome and the purpose for which he desired to go there. So Paul, a bond slave of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle.

The Bible tells us that we should make our calling and election sure. Paul said, I was called to be an apostle. Now, it is wrong for us to classify callings of God as important or highest calling or greatest calling or whatever.

I don't know what God has called you to be. But it's important that you realize that you can't be any more than what God has called you to be. And we oftentimes get into trouble trying to do more than God has called us to do.

Paul was called to be an apostle. Then that's great. Paul should be an apostle.

If he said Paul called to be a tent maker, then he should be a tent maker. Paul called to be a camel driver, then he should be a camel driver. In other words, it's whatever God has called you to be, that's the highest calling for your life because you can't be more than what God has called you to be.

And God only holds you responsible to be what he's called you to be. We oftentimes are guilty of taking on duties that God hasn't laid on us. Taking upon ourselves the responsibility because a great desire to serve God in some greater capacity.

And thus I launch into areas where God has not called me. And that can be disastrous. I would give you a personal testimony, but we don't have time.

I have tried to be on occasions, but God didn't call me to be. And I always ended disastrously. Sometimes our ambitions and our desires are beyond the Lord's callings.

Paul called to be an apostle. Separated unto the gospel of God, which of course, the book of Romans is dedicated to that subject. Which he had promised before by his prophets in the Holy Scriptures.

This glorious gospel of the Messiah, that salvation through the Messiah is something that God prophesied through the prophets concerning his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh. Now, David came to Nathan, the prophet, and said, I want to build a house for the Lord. I live in this beautiful palace and God still lives in that tent.

They're still worshiping God in the tabernacle. And it isn't right that I should live in this glorious palace while God lives in a tent. I want to build a house for the Lord, the most glorious building in the world.

Nathan, the prophet said, oh, that's great, David, do all that is in your heart. That night, the Lord came to Nathan, the prophet, and spoke to him and said, Nathan, you spoke out of turn. You spoke too quickly.

You're going to have to go back to David and you're going to have to tell him that he's not going to be able to build a house for me. His hands are too bloody. He's a man of war.

I can't have him building a house for me. But you tell David that I will build him a house. And there shall not cease from his seed one to sit upon the throne.

David saw Nathan the next day and Nathan said, David, I've got some bad news and good news. The bad news first. God spoke to me last night and said, you can't build a house for him.

Your hands are too bloody. You're a man of war. But your son will be able to rise up and build a house.

But the good news, David, God is going to build you a house. And from your seed, there will never cease to be a king sitting upon the throne of Israel. From which David immediately understood that the Messiah was to come from David's seed.

And of course, this was just overwhelming to David. He went in before the Lord and he said, oh, Lord, you took me from the sheep coat from following after the sheep. Lord, I was nothing.

I was just a shepherd. And yet you took me and you made me the king over your people. And you've blessed me so much.

And now you speak of the years to come. Oh, God, what can I say? And David was brought to a place of silence before God. So overwhelmed by the grace of God.

Have you ever been brought to that place? So overwhelmed by the goodness of God that there is just nothing you could say. Savnerola said when prayer reaches its ultimate, words are impossible. That communion with God, when you really realize what God has promised to do for us, it's just so overwhelming.

There are times that I just I just what can you say? Too much. God is too much. Now, according to the promise, then he is to come as the seed of David.

There shall come out of Jesse a righteous branch. So it is interesting that in the Gospels, when they record the genealogies of Jesus, that though the genealogy of Matthew and Luke are different. Both of them go back to David.

But from David, they take different branches in Matthew's genealogy. When you get to David and David begat Solomon of Bathsheba, who was the wife of Uriah. And it brings you the genealogy from Solomon on down to Joseph, who was supposed by the people to be the father of Jesus.

Now, in the genealogy coming from Solomon, you come to this fellow, Jeconiah, and the Lord placed a curse upon Jeconiah from the last verse of the 22nd chapter of Jeremiah, where Jeremiah said, Hear, O earth, the word of the Lord. There shall not be a seed of Jeconiah to sit upon the throne of David forever. If Jesus were the son of Joseph, he could not sit on the throne.

Luke gives us another genealogy, the genealogy of Mary, of Joseph, who was the son-in-law of Heli. So it's Mary's genealogy in Luke. And he traces a different line back to David.

He comes back to Nathan, the son of David. So that Jesus, through Mary, a descendant of David and thus a claimant to the throne of David, but not through Jeconiah. If so, he could not be a claimant to the throne because of the curse of God, that there should not be any of Jeconiah's seed sitting upon the throne of Israel.

So the two genealogies, both to show that it is through David. And so Paul declares concerning his son, Jesus Christ, our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh and declared to be the son of God with power according to the spirit of holiness by the resurrection from the dead. And so that resurrection of Christ, the proof of the claim or the declaration.

By whom we have received grace and apostleship for the obedience to the faith among all nations for his name. Among whom are ye also the called of Jesus Christ to all that be in Orange County, beloved of God called to be saints. Grace to you.

And I like to personalize the scriptures. I like to believe that they were writing to me because the only thing that doesn't really apply to me there is is Rome. But I'm beloved of God and God's called me to be a saint.

And really, Paul's epistle is to the saints of God, the church. Grace to you and peace from God, our father in the Lord Jesus Christ. Grace and peace.

The Siamese twins of the New Testament. They're always coupled together and always in that order. I don't recall of any place in the New Testament where it says peace and grace.

But it is always grace and peace. Why? Because you cannot really know the peace of God until you have experienced the grace of God. Now, there was years in my Christian experience that I really didn't have the peace of God.

I have peace with God that was established through the death of Jesus Christ. But I didn't have the peace of God because I was going about by my own works to establish a righteous standing before God. And as long as I was seeking by my effort to be righteous before God, I never found peace.

There was always a struggle in my Christian experience. I was always trying to be a little better and always promising that I would do better. And I was restless.

I never had peace until I experienced the grace of God. And then I understood what it's all about. Grace and peace.

Grace is always first. And if you haven't yet experienced the grace of God, then you really don't know the peace of God in your life yet. First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for you all that your faith is spoken of throughout the whole world.

So there was a body of believers there in Rome. And their faith in Christ was known everywhere. For God is my witness whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his son.

That without ceasing, I make mention of you always in my prayers. It's interesting to me that Paul has to call God as the witness to his prayer life. And I think that that's proper.

Jesus said, when you pray, go in the closet, shut the door. And when you have prayed to your father, or prayed to your father who seeth in secret, and your father which seeth in secret will reward you openly, don't make a big public show of your prayer. Don't write newsletters all over the United States telling people that you're going to go into your closet of prayer and kneel on your special rug and hold them up in prayer and then offer to sell them a square of that rug for \$5 donation.

I'm going to Jerusalem and I'm taking my prayer rug and I'm going to place this down on the Mount of Olives, about the spot where Jesus is going to set his foot when he returns. And I'm going to pray for you on the Mount of Olives. Now, please send me your requests.

Those things you want me to pray for you when I'm there. And enclose a gift. And then your next letter, you can buy a little square of that prayer cloth or that rug.

Or a donation. God help us. Paul has to call God as his witness to his prayer life.

God is my witness. I don't cease praying for you night and day. Making mention of you always in my prayers, making request if by any means, now at length, I might have a prosperous journey by the will of God to come unto you.

Now, Paul is at Corinth. He's going to head for Jerusalem. He doesn't know what waits him in Jerusalem, except that everywhere he goes, the Spirit is telling him that bonds and imprisonment await him there.

And yet, as he writes to those in Rome, he's saying, I'm hoping to come to you. I'm praying that if by any means, I might have a prosperous journey to you by the will of God. Now, Paul had said, I must also see Rome.

Later, when he was in prison in Jerusalem, discouraged and defeated, the Lord said, even as you have testified of me here in Jerusalem, Paul, be a good cheer because you must also testify me of Rome. So he did come to Rome by the will of God. I don't know that you, well, it was a prosperous journey.

Though he was shipwrecked and the whole thing, you know, yet by being shipwrecked on the island of Malta, he was able to lead Publius to the Lord. And many of the Maltese people accepted Jesus. While Paul was there.

So it was spiritually very prosperous, though you might challenge that from a purely physical standpoint with all of the hardship that he went through. 14 days at sea in that storm when everyone was so sick, they couldn't eat and the whole thing. Yet, Paul expresses his desire to God to go to Rome.

For I long to see you that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift to the end that you might be established. Paul's desire not to be just a tourist to see the Colosseum and to see the forum and all of the marvelous buildings in Rome. But the desire is to come to minister to the church that he might impart to them a spiritual gift by which they might be established.

That is that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith, both of you and me, that we might really minister to each other. And it's true. You cannot minister to others without being ministered to yourself.

You cannot give without receiving. There is always that mutual benefit of the ministry. Now, I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that many times I purpose to come to you.

But up until now, I've been hindered that I might also have some fruit among you, even as among other Gentiles. I desire to bear fruit in Rome as I have in other places. For I am a debtor both to the Greeks and to the barbarians, both to the wise and the unwise.

So as much as is in me, or as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also, for I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, that just shall live by faith. So Paul's declaration, I'm ready to come to Rome.

I want to bear fruit in Rome. I'm not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. It's the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes, Jew first, also the Greek.

For in this, God has revealed the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, that just shall live by faith. In the gospel of Jesus Christ, the righteousness of God is revealed, because you see, even God could not forgive our sins unrighteously. There had to be a righteous basis for the forgiveness of our sins.

For a judge to just totally dismiss charges against a guilty man is not righteous. God cannot just righteously say, well, you're forgiven. There has to be a righteous basis for God is righteous.

And there has to be a righteous basis for the forgiveness of your sins. That righteous basis is found in the gospel of Jesus Christ. For God had sentenced the one who sins to death.

And the only righteous thing is to put to death the sinner, because that is the sentence that has been meted out against sin, sinful man. So, God established a righteous basis for forgiveness by Jesus Christ becoming a substitute, taking your sin upon Himself and dying in your place. The righteous for the unrighteous, and thus providing God the righteous basis for the forgiveness.

You are forgiven because Jesus Christ died for you. He took your place. The death that you deserved, He took your place and died for you.

And thus God has that right. Thus, the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith, as it is written, that just shall live by faith. For the wrath of God, now the righteousness of God, and immediately we

contrast that with the wrath of God, is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who hold the truth in unrighteousness.

So, here we find the righteousness of God revealed. Now the wrath of God revealed. God's wrath revealed against, number one, the ungodliness, and secondly, the unrighteousness.

What's the difference between ungodliness and unrighteousness? You remember when Moses came down from Mount Sinai, he had the two tables of stone with the Ten Commandments. On the first table of stone, the first four commandments dealt with man's relationship with God. Thou shalt have no other gods before me.

Thou shalt not take the name of the Lord thy God in vain. Thou shalt not make any graven image or likeness of God's. Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.

Now, to violate one of these first four commands constituted a wrong relationship with God, which is ungodliness. The second table of stone dealt with man's relationship with fellow man. And to violate one of the laws on the second table of stone is not living the right kind of life that you should be living with your neighbor.

And thus, it constitutes unrighteousness, a wrong relationship with my neighbor. Unrighteousness. So, the wrath of God is to be revealed against the ungodliness and the unrighteousness of men who hold the truth of God.

But they hold it in unrighteousness. Having and knowing is not enough. James said, be ye doers of the word, not hearers only deceiving yourselves.

A lot of people today are deceiving themselves because they've heard the word. They know the word. They know what God commands.

They hold the truth of God. But unfortunately, they hold it in unrighteousness. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them, for God hath shown it unto them.

So, there is within my own conscience that awareness of what is right and wrong. Universally, there is within the consciousness of man that which I know to be right, that which I know to be wrong. It's manifest within me.

God has just sort of inscribed it in my heart and mind, in my conscience, and I know what is right. I know what is wrong. That which may be known of God is manifest in them.

God has shown it unto them. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen. Or, for the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen.

That is, the invisible God is revealed through His creation. The heavens declare the glory of God. The earth shows His handiwork.

Day and to day they utter their speech. Night and to night their voice goeth forth. There's not a speech or a language where their voice is not heard.

God speaks to man in the universal language of nature, so that by nature I am aware that God does exist. The fool has said in his heart there is no God. The invisible things of him are revealed in nature.

Because that when they knew God, they're without excuse, because God is revealed by the things that He has made, even His eternal power and deity or Godhead, so that they are without excuse. Because when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God. Now, how can I do that in my own life? I fail to glorify God as God whenever I argue with Him.

Because my arguing with God is in essence saying, I know better what is good for me than you. And I'm really sort of exalting myself as God. I am not glorifying God as God when I make demands upon Him, when I insist through prayer that God does things a certain way.

That is not glorifying God as God. And there is just an awful lot of this being propounded today by some of these present-day evangelists. And much of their teaching is really ungodly because it elevates man to the position of being authority, and God becomes the servant.

And so it's no longer Chuck, a servant of Jesus Christ, but it's Chuck, the Lord of Jesus Christ in a sense, because he's supposed to follow my every whim and wish and fulfill my every desire. I was reading in a book the other day by a well-known minister of a very large church that he was desiring a bicycle and praying for a bicycle. And after praying several months for this bicycle and not receiving it, he became angry with God.

And he said, how can I teach people to pray and to believe and trust You in prayer when here I've been praying all this time for a bicycle and You've never given me the bicycle? And he said, God said to him, well, you've never told me what kind you wanted. There are all kinds of bicycles. Ten speeds, cruisers.

In my book, that's not glorifying God as God. What kind of a God am I serving who doesn't know what kind of a bicycle is best for me? Waiting to get the model number from me before He responds, you see. Waiting to get my choice of colors.

No. I reject that concept of God. He is not a genie waiting to fulfill my slightest wish or whim.

And when I seek to treat God as a genie, that is not glorifying God as God. Peter tells us that if any of us suffer according to the will of God, we should just commit the keepings of our soul unto Him as a faithful Creator. I find that commitment, total commitment, is the greatest place of rest and peace I know.

Because I don't have in my mind things that God must do for me. But I have a commitment of myself to God so that whatever He does, I accept. And I can rest.

Now, we have made our offer officially for the property in Newport Beach. And I don't know at this point if we're going to get it or not. And I'm not really praying that we get it.

I'm not really praying that we don't get it. I'm just praying, Lord, Your will be done. If You want us to have it, fine, Lord.

If You don't want us to have it, fine, Lord. But you see, if I was in a big, you know, have-tos, we've got to have this property, you know, and you get into that thing, and God, You've got to give this to us kind of bit, then I am sitting in the driver's seat and I'm ordering God what to do. And I am then putting myself in the position of God and making Him subservient to me.

That's not glorifying God as God. And it's a trap that people fall into quite easily. Total commitment to whatever God wants.

Such a beautiful way to live because you learn then to accept whatever comes along. You're never disturbed because you're always expecting to be disturbed. The man who is always disturbed is the man who never expects to be disturbed.

He doesn't really plan disturbances into his life. And thus, he's very disturbed whenever a disturbance comes. But the man who is never disturbed is the man who is always expecting disturbances.

So, when a disturbance comes, it doesn't disturb him because he's expecting it. Now, I've got a working relationship with God and I reaffirm it every morning. God, You can disturb me today for anything You want.

If my plans don't coincide with Yours, then Lord, disrupt my plans. Disturb me. Put me on Your path because I want Your will to be done in my life today.

And thus, if suddenly something comes up and I'm not able to make that planned trip or whatever, hey, God has something else in mind. The committing of the keeping of my soul unto Him as a faithful Creator. Glorifying God as God.

But, when they knew God, they would not glorify Him as God. Neither were they thankful. But they became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened.

And professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. Now, you see, what Paul is telling them is that God has revealed Himself through nature. Man can know God through nature.

Nature is a revelation of God. It's speaking to man of the existence of God. It's declaring the glory of God, His power, His wonders.

But, if a man doesn't want to hold the truth of God, he doesn't want to glorify God as God. He wants to elevate himself to the God level. I am God.

For I am the Master of my fate. I am the Captain of my soul. I am God.

I am self-governed man. Then, as he looks at nature, he looks at nature from a presuppositional position that God does not exist. And he then attempts to explain the myriad phenomena of nature apart from God by natural phenomena.

By natural happenings or circumstances. And one of their favorite phrases is the fortuitous occurrences of accidental circumstances. And that can explain just about anything.

All of these random chance factors just so happen that there were all of these fortuitous occurrences of these accidental circumstances that finally, that you are the end product of accident. Billions of them through billions of years. Here you suddenly are as the result of this spontaneous generation.

There was an interesting symposium in Europe back in 1975, I believe it was. Carl Sagan wrote a book summarizing the convention. It was the leading scientists of the world who were gathered together for a symposium to determine whether or not extraterrestrial beings were trying to make contact with the planet Earth.

And so the book published by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology on Extraterrestrial Communications, edited by Carl Sagan, was a report of this symposium and this gathering of the world's

renowned scientists who offered their various papers on the subject of extraterrestrial beings seeking to communicate to those on the planet Earth. I was very fascinated with one of the very first papers presented to this symposium by a group of scientists who felt that it would be important in determining whether or not there were beings out there trying to communicate with us here on the Earth to determine what are the chance factors that life forms could exist on some other planet within the universe. Taking into consideration all of the multiplied obstacles, really, of life existing, they began to feed into the computer the factors necessary for the development of the first cell.

All of the variables to create the first cell. And the computer, working out these various factors, came out with the answer that there was only one chance in 10 to the 27th power of the first cell ever being created. Now, supposing the Earth is 6 billion years old, that's only about 10 to the 17th power seconds.

And so if you had these factors, say a billion of them, each second, going on for 6 billion years, you would only be developing your first cell. But then you have to develop two cells at the same place. And the first paper concluded that there were no extraterrestrial beings trying to communicate with the planet Earth because it's impossible that there could be any life forms anywhere else in the universe because of the complexities of the development of the cell.

Life is impossible any place in the universe. So, no sense to have the symposium of whether or not there are extraterrestrial beings trying to communicate with us because it's impossible that they could exist. The chance factors just rule it out.

I thought that that was a very interesting paper. I enjoyed reading it. But I wondered, why didn't they carry that one step further and realize that if it's impossible that life forms could exist anywhere in the universe apart from here, how in the world do they think they exist here? If it's impossible that life forms could form on a planet in another galaxy, then it should also be impossible for life forms to appear here.

Which indeed it is. Impossible by accident. We were created.

But man who comes to nature with a pre-suppositional base that God does not exist, then tries to explain the phenomena of life apart from God and you get into all kinds of foolish speculations. You ever wondered how it is that you were able to walk? Well, once upon a time, billions of years ago, back when the earth was covered with primordial ooze, and this cell had developed to the place of a worm-like creature as it made its way out of the ooze and out of the waters and onto the land, this fish-like creature coming onto land, and flipping itself around on this foreign environment, scratched itself on the coral reef or upon the rock. And that scratch developed into a wart-like appendage which continued to develop and grow until it became a leg with feet and five toes.

And after billions of years, when the second leg also developed, you were able to walk instead of hop. That is one of the explanations that has been offered for the development of the legs. I sort of agree with Paul.

They became vain in their imaginations and their foolish heart was darkened and professing themselves to be wise, they became fools. You see, to rule God out is the stance of the fool. For the fool has said in his heart, there is no God.

And to try to understand the universe apart from God is impossible without getting into all kinds of fanciful, unbelievable, preposterous speculation which is nothing more than sheer foolishness but is being passed

off as scientific poppycock. Professing themselves to be wise, they became fools because they changed the glory of an uncorruptible God into an image likened to corruptible man. They made God like man.

They thought of God in the terms of man. Sought to bring God down to man's level. The glory of an uncorruptible God now made to look like man by the little idol or images that they have carved or drawn.

Like birds, four-footed beasts and creeping things. And as you look at the objects of worship of the ancient men, ancient peoples, you see these grotesque looking creatures that were representation of the deities of the various peoples. And you realize what Paul is talking about.

Man seeking to corrupt God. Now because of this, God also gave them up. And we have the thrice God giving them up.

God gave them up to uncleanness or filthiness through the lust of their own hearts to dishonor their own bodies between themselves. For they changed the truth of God into a lie and they worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator who is blessed forever. So God gave them up to these filthy lusts in their own hearts.

I can remember that when I was a boy in junior high school, the fellows would smuggle around these Sunshine and Health magazines. And that was about as pornographic as you could get. Magazines that dealt with nudism in the U.S. And these were the things, you know, that the guys would snicker over.

And it was just, you know, it was, well, of course, you had to have your connections to even get a copy of those things. And I think in my lifetime how far we have sunk. Because you can go into practically any grocery store, any drug store, and you can pick up these magazines today with all kinds of implicit pictures that are designed to arouse and stimulate the flesh.

And we realize that we are seeing the consequences of God giving men up to uncleanness through their lust. The moral downward spiral that we are observing in our society is concurrent with the teaching of evolution. The denial of the existence of God.

Trying to understand our universe apart from God. And the result of man wanting to rule God out of his mind and out of the thinking processes is that God gives man over to a mind in which he can go ahead and sink into the filthiness of his own heart. Beginning to dishonor their own bodies between themselves where they changed the truth of God into a lie.

And they worship and serve the creature more than the Creator who is blessed forevermore. You see, by the evolutionary theory, the creature becomes God. It's the almighty cell and its tremendous propensities to make these phenomenal changes to develop all of the forms of life that we can see.

The marvelous adaptabilities in nature. And it becomes God. They worship and serve the creature more than the Creator.

They look at nature irrationally. Deifying nature rather than worshiping the God who created nature. And whenever you stop at nature and you worship nature, you're stopping one step short.

That's irrational to look at nature and say that's God. It's looking at nature and saying that is the creation of God and letting nature speak to you of God. That's the rational way to observe nature.

And so man became irrational in his observation of nature and he worshiped and served the creature more than the Creator who is blessed forever. For this cause, God gave them up to unnatural affections. For even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature.

And likewise, also the men leaving the natural use of the woman burned in their lust one toward another. Men with men doing that which is unseemly and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was necessary or which was right. And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge, God gave them over to reprobate minds to do those things which are unspeakable.

Not convenient. Not proper. So, man's degradation.

The downward spiral. Can we observe it? You bet you we can in the day in which we live. We see these very things of which Paul warned and spoke.

As man is sought to eliminate God from his mind, from his life, from our schools, the awareness, the consciousness of God, we see the inevitable consequences in a society that is going deeper into the cesspool of immorality. We see the downward trend being filled with all unrighteousness. Now, they held the truth of God in unrighteousness, but now they don't even hold the truth of God anymore.

God's given them over to reprobate minds and thus they are filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity, whispers, backbiters, haters of God, spiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful. Sounds like the morning newspaper. We're surrounded.

We see the inevitable consequences of man trying to rule God out of his life. We see it in our society in which we live these very things prevalent in our society, who knowing the judgment of God that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them. Now, do you watch soap operas? Do you enjoy watching soap operas? Do you enjoy watching Dallas? Do you enjoy watching A Murder Mystery? Do you enjoy watching movies that have these X-rated features to them? If you enjoy watching these things, then are you not taking pleasure in those who do them? You see, you may square off very self-righteously and say, well, I never commit fornication, and I have never murdered anybody, or I've never done this or that or the other.

But Paul says not only do they do them, but they take pleasure in those that do them. That is, a person actually enjoys reading about it. Or a person enjoys watching it portrayed.

Things that I wouldn't think about doing myself, but there's some kind of an excitement watching someone else do it. That's taking pleasure in those that do. Be careful.

God help us. We are being bombarded on every side by Satan's wiles seeking to snare us, draw us in, because it's fascinating, it's interesting. Oh, it's just life, and I just am interested in life, you know.

Rationalize how you please. Be careful if you take pleasure in people who do these things, watching them do these things. Therefore, thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art that judgest.

You see, I read this list and I say, oh, yes, that's horrible. My, I just don't know what we're going to do. You know, the world is going so terrible bad, you know.

Terrible that people would do those kind of things. Terrible that people would live like that. Well, you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judges.

For wherein you judge another, you're condemning yourself. For you that judge are doing the same things. We've got to be careful of this judgment bit, because if I have the capacity to judge someone else and say, that's wrong, he should not be doing that, then I'm condemning myself because I know it's wrong.

And if I do it, it's doubly wrong because I know it's wrong because I said it was wrong for him to do it. You know, it's amazing how horrible our sins look when someone else is doing them, you know. Let someone else commit my sins.

And man, I can get just all kinds of righteous indignation. I can tell you why I did it. I can justify it.

But it's horrible when someone else does it. Terrible. Be careful, O man, whoever you are who is guilty of judging.

You're only condemning yourself because you're testifying to the fact that you know better when you've done those same things yourself. But we are sure that the judgment of God is according to truth against them which commit such things. God will have true judgment.

And do you think, O man, that judges those that do such things and that you're doing the same Do you think that you're going to escape the judgment of God? 1 Corinthians chapter 5, Paul tells us that we're all to appear before the judgment seat of Christ to receive the things done in our bodies whether they be good or evil. Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we seek to persuade men. Do you think that you're going to escape the judgment of God? Do you think that you've got some kind of an immunity or a divine dispensation, purchased your indulgence, that you can get by with it? Or do you despise the riches of God's goodness and forbearance and longsuffering? You see, the mistake that many people so often make is the misinterpreting of the longsuffering and the patience of God.

God is so forbearing with us. God is so patient with us. God is so longsuffering.

And He doesn't immediately smite us and cut us off when we do evil. God has great patience with evildoers. I don't know.

I wouldn't have that much patience. I would rather God didn't. I would rather God just wipe them out.

When I read of some of these things and I read, you know, the guy murders his family up in Chino. Now you see him in court and you know there's going to be months of court appearances and all. And you think, oh, God.

You know, quit justice, Lord. But when it's me, oh, patience, Lord. I'm working on it now, you know.

I hope one of these days, Lord, I'm going to conquer, you know. But sometimes I misinterpret that patience of God and that longsuffering as approval. Or that God really doesn't matter to God.

Or people actually become so deceived that they believe that God is approving the things they do because they say, I still have such blessing upon my life. You know, if God wasn't pleased with the way I'm living, then He surely would have, you know, taken away the blessings and all from my life. And because their lives continue to be blessed, they say, well, God is approving the things that I am doing.

Not so. Do you think you're going to escape the judgment of God? Do you despise the riches of His goodness and the forbearance and the longsuffering? Don't you know that the goodness of God is intended to lead you to repentance? But after the hardness and impenitent heart, you're actually treasuring up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath and the revelation of the righteous judgment of God. Actually, it's just like a dam holding back this judgment of God.

And you're just storing up as you continue in your ways of sin and unrighteousness. It's just storing up. And one day the dam is going to be released and the flood of judgment is going to carry you away.

Woe, woe, woe to the inhabitants of the earth by reason of the three trumpets which are yet to sound. And then we are reading of the angel's warning of the wrath of God that is coming as He pours out the cup of His wrath and fury upon man. And let me tell you something.

The earth in which we live is ripening for judgment. In fact, as I look at the world today and the things in the world today, I wonder just how much longer God can wait before He judges. The Bible tells us that God waited a long time while Noah was building the ark, but the judgment did come.

God's judgment is going to come again. And it's just being treasured up or stored up against the day of the wrath of the revelation of the righteous judgment of God who will render to every man according to his deeds. To them who by patient continuance in well-doing seek for glory and honor and immortality, God will grant to them eternal life.

But unto them that are contentious and do not obey the truth but obey unrighteousness, they will receive the indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish upon every soul of man that is doing evil, of the Jew first and of also the Gentile. But glory and honor and peace to every man that is working good to the Jew first and also to the Gentile. For there is no respect of persons with God.

It doesn't matter if you're a Jew or a Gentile. God doesn't respect your person. It's what you are that God acknowledges in what you're doing.

For as many as have sinned without the law will perish without law. And as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law. Now, the Gentiles without the law, they're going to be judged without the law.

There is the law that God has written in our own hearts, the conscience. The Jews who have the law, God will judge them by that law. For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified.

For when the Gentile, which have not the law, do by nature the things contained within the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile either accusing or else excusing one another. God has written His law in every man's heart. There is that consciousness and awareness of good and evil.

It's innate. Written in my heart by God. And my conscience either excuses or accuses me.

In the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ according to my Gospel. Behold, now He's addressing Himself to the Jews. They're in Rome.

You are called a Jew, and you are resting in the law, and you make your boast of God. That you know His will. You approve the things that are more excellent because you've been instructed out of the law.

And you are confident that you are a guide of the blind, a light to those which are in darkness. You're an instructor of the foolish. You're a teacher of babes.

You have a form of knowledge and of the truth in the law. How about it though? You that are teaching others, do you not teach yourself? You that are preaching that a man should not steal, do you steal? You that say that a man should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You that abhor as idols, do you commit sacrilege? Thou that makest thy boast of the law through breaking the law, dishonest thou God? So Paul is now talking to the Jews. They have this position of spiritual superiority over other men.

God has revealed His will to the Jews. God has given His law to the Jews. We are a guide to the blind.

We are a light to those in darkness. We're an instructor of the foolish. But Paul says, look, in teaching others, don't you listen to yourself? Aren't you learning yourself? Now, Jesus said to His disciples, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you're not going to enter the Kingdom of Heaven.

And as He began to illustrate that statement, He showed that the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees was totally related to outward observances of the law when inwardly they were violating the law. The law says thou shalt not kill, but you hate that man so much you'd love to kill him. As far as Jesus is concerned, you're guilty of violating the law thou shalt not kill.

Thou shalt not commit adultery, and yet you have such great lust and desire for that gal. God says, hey, you've committed adultery in your heart. The law is spiritual.

And so Paul is saying, hey, you teach, you shouldn't commit adultery. Do you commit adultery? You say you shouldn't have idols. Do you commit sacrilege? Is there some idol in your life? Something that you hold up to be more important than God? Some goal or ambition or desire that supersedes your love for God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you as it is written, for circumcision verily profiteth if you keep the law.

But if you be a breaker of the law, thy circumcision is made uncircumcision. Now the idea of circumcision, there's a spiritual concept behind it, and it is the cutting away of the flesh which means I am to live after the Spirit and not after the flesh. And that was the spiritual symbolism of circumcision.

A race of people who would live after the Spirit, who would walk after God, not walking after the flesh. But the people began to take the physical right and deny the spiritual application. Though physically they were circumcised, spiritually they walked after the flesh.

Paul said, I don't care if you've been physically circumcised. If you're still walking after the flesh, your physical circumcision is meaningless because it isn't the circumcision of the flesh that really counts before God. It's the circumcision of the heart.

In the same token, as Christians, water baptism symbolizes the death and the end of the old life after the flesh. And coming up out of the water symbolizes the new resurrected life in Jesus Christ. And if I have been baptized forwards, backwards, and three times in the name of the Father, Son, and the Holy Spirit, and I am still walking after the flesh, that baptism is totally meaningless.

For it is the baptism of the heart that counts. The circumcision of the heart that counts. God wants me to be walking after the Spirit.

To be desiring in my heart the walk of the Spirit. Therefore, if the uncircumcision, that is the Gentile uncircumcised, keeps the righteousness of the law, shall not his uncircumcision be counted for circumcision? Now this is also true in baptism. If a person has never gone through the physical rite of baptism, if he is indeed alive unto God in the Spirit and living and walking after the Spirit, his faith in God and walk after the Spirit counts for his not being baptized in water.

And I disagree with these people who place such a tremendous emphasis upon getting them down to the water and baptizing them in order that they might be saved. For the true baptism is of the heart, a clear conscience before God. It isn't the washing away of the filth of the flesh, according to Peter.

And Paul the Apostle himself said, I thank God I didn't baptize any of you but Crispus and Gaius, as he wrote to the Corinthian church. He said, for God didn't call me to baptize, but to preach the Gospel. Therefore, God is looking at the man's heart.

God is looking at your heart. What is it that you desire? One thing have I desired of the Lord and that will I seek after. Am I really seeking after the Lord to dwell in His presence? To live in fellowship, continual fellowship with Him? Or do I pay Him service on Sunday and then the rest of the week devote my life to my pursuit after my fleshly, worldly desires and goals and ambitions? Shall not the uncircumcision which is by nature, if it fulfill the law, judge thee who by the letter and circumcision are transgressing the law? For He is not a Jew which is one outwardly.

Neither is that circumcision which is outward in the flesh. But He is a Jew which is one inwardly and circumcision is that of the heart in the Spirit and not in the letter, whose praise is not of men but of God. Not seeking the approval of men but seeking the approval of God.

Walking after God in the Spirit. It isn't the life in the flesh that man sees that's important. It's the life in the Spirit that God sees which is important.

My heart and the position of my heart before God. Now, Paul has in the first two chapters successfully made us all guilty. The Gentile world in its degraded state, reprobate mind, guilty before God.

Because not only are they doing these unspeakable things, but they're taking pleasure in those that do them. But also the Jew who judges the Gentile and says, oh, isn't it terrible that they're doing those things and living that way. He is also guilty before God because though he is giving God lip service perhaps, making outward observances of the law within his heart, there's defilement.

He judges others for what they're doing, but he's guilty of doing the same himself. So he also is guilty before God. The man who has never heard is guilty because God has written His law in his heart.

And he'll be judged without the law. God has revealed Himself in nature and that which can be known of God has been plainly, clearly displayed in nature. But he's ignored the message of God through nature because he didn't want to retain God in his heart.

And thus, he looked at nature with a presuppositional base that God does not exist. The whole world is now guilty before God. Terrible place to leave you.

But when we come back, we'll find God's solution in chapters 3 and 4 for the guilty world. God's provisions for sinful man. As Paul begins to unfold for us the glorious grace of God revealed through Jesus Christ.

Paul loves to paint pictures. He loves to paint pictures of the grace of God. But in order that we might enjoy all of the beauties and the brilliance of the grace of God, the colors, it's important first of all to paint a background for the picture.

And so he takes his canvas and he dips his brush in coal black paint. And he paints the background. Chapters 1 and 2 of Romans.

He's giving you this background that he might now splash upon the canvas the brilliance of the glory of the grace of God that he has revealed to us through Jesus Christ. We, the sinning world, deserving that wrath of God and yet being offered a glorious place of fellowship and life with God. Living and walking after the Spirit.

That eternal life of God being offered to man. So we'll get into the glorious grace of God. God's solutions for sinning man.

So you can move ahead. There's no rule against reading chapters 3 and 4 in advance and discovering what God has done to provide for us His glorious grace. May the Lord be with you and bless you as you walk with Him.

May the Lord clean up your TV viewing, your magazine reading. God help us not to be caught in that trap of living after the flesh, that's death. Not to enjoy the things of the flesh.

Taking pleasure in those that do them. May we take pleasure in walking with God. Fellowshiping with Him.

Experiencing His presence, His love, His power in our lives. May you come into a deeper, richer, fuller appreciation of God's love and grace for you. In Jesus' name.

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