

THE LETTER OF PAUL TO THE ROMANS

Lesson 3 – Study Questions

Romans 1:18-2:11

Review: *From your experience at the Cornerstone meeting last week, share something that helped build your faith.*

NOTE: With today's passage, Paul begins a long section in which he focuses on the sinful world that rejects the righteousness of God. "Paul's purpose is not to paint the world in the darkest possible colors, but to set the stage for his presentation of the gospel. By reminding us of our sins, he helps us see where we need to experience God's power...Setting the world right means confronting everything that is taking the world in the wrong direction." *Romans: Amazing Grace, Kevin Perrotta*

DAY ONE

Read Romans 1:18-21

1. As today's passage begins, Paul states that the "wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of those who by their wickedness suppress the truth." Refer to the Commentary, page 14, and briefly summarize what the "truth" represents?

2. Msgr. Mikesch says that "those who turn away from God will suffer the pain which is the necessary result of evil. Sin is its own punishment." How would you explain this concept?

3. How do you differentiate human passionate anger versus God's wrath (described in the Catholic Bible Dictionary as the "fixed response of divine holiness to sin")?

NOTE: In reality, God is eternally unchanging; he does not lose his cool or boil over with rage as you and I sometimes do. Hence, when Scripture speaks of divine indignation or anger, it means God's fixed response to sin – sin being completely at odds with his justice and holiness. The Bible routinely employs such humanlike descriptions for the purpose of making the infinite mystery of God more understandable to finite minds. *Hahn and Mitch*

4. Paul says that all people, even people of the pagan world, have the ability and should come to know God because he has made himself evident to them through the things he has made (verses 19-20). According to the end of verse 20 what does Paul say about the pagans?

5. In verse 21 Paul says that the pagan world knew about God but failed to do two things. What are they and what happened to them as a result?

6. CONNECTION: God created us in his likeness and image to be in relationship with him. In these last few verses, Paul speaks of how God has plainly manifested himself to all humanity through his creative power. The first form of revelation is an act of creation. “Natural revelation is what can be known about God by reflecting on creation with the tools of human reason.” *Catholic Bible Dictionary* With this idea in mind, what are some of the qualities of God that you perceive through the things he has made?

Read Psalm 145:1-3 as today’s prayer of praise and adoration and let this lead you into prayer.

DAY TWO

Read Romans 1:22-28

7. In verse 22 Paul says that Gentiles, who fail to recognize God’s eternal power and divine nature, claim to be wise but in reality they have become foolish. Read the following passages and briefly describe the kind of person who is called foolish:

Psalm 14:1

Proverbs 28:26

8. According to verse 23, the pagans exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images. What form did these images take?

9. God has given the gift of free will to every person so each could make their own choices. According to verse 24 the pagans used their free will to turn away from God. What happened to them?

10. In verse 25 Paul describes the terrible exchange that the pagans made saying, “they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.” How would you describe the lie that they worshipped?

11. In verses 26-27 Paul focuses on the lie of idolatry leading to sexual impurity. What are the consequences for people who do not see fit to acknowledge God according to verse 28?

THINK: While reading this week’s verses let us remember that we all fall short of the glory of God.

12. CONNECTION: We live in a society where it is evident that more people are exchanging God for a lie. To serve the creature rather than the Creator is a rather poor bargain. Daily we navigate through a plethora of temporal offers to make us richer, more beautiful, more handsome, younger, healthier ... most of them, empty promises. In what ways do you find the promises of Christ to be your shield against the lies of society?

Read Matthew 6:31-33. In a prayer, record how God's love sustains you.

DAY THREE

Read Romans 1:29-32

13. As today's passage begins, Paul continues to describe life without God. Among the forms of evil listed in verses 29-31, we all recognize many manifested in our current culture. Why do you think this continues today?

14. Read Galatians 5:22-23. Is there a fruit of the Spirit which helps you battle the evil you see in our current culture?

15. Paul believes that “they” (the pagans) have a conscience. According to the beginning of verse 32 they know “God’s decree” - the fundamentals of right and wrong. What should be the consequence of their sins?

16. At the end of verse 32, the wickedness of the pagans is seen not only in the actions they do to themselves but in what other way?

17. Reread Romans 1:12. How would you contrast Romans 1:12 and the end of Romans 1:32?

18. CONNECTION: It causes us great sorrow when we witness sinfulness. The impact of sinful behavior extends beyond just the sinner. Sometimes, however, with God’s help we can “light a lamp in the darkness.” If you have been part of redirecting someone onto a right path, describe the blessings of the outcome.

Read Luke 15:4-7 and record verse 7. Let these thoughts lead you into prayer.

DAY FOUR

Read Romans 2:1-4

19. In verse 1 Paul shifts from talking about the pagans to talking to his readers, the Roman Christians. His point is that sin is not specific to pagans. For what reason does Paul tell his readers that they have no excuse in passing judgments on others?

NOTE: With Chapter 2 Paul addresses his letter to an “interlocutor” (an imaginary conversation partner). He addresses “You”, the Jewish Christian interlocutor, making assertions, formulating questions, and anticipating objections, all in the format of a lively debate. *Hahn and Mitch*

This classical diatribe was common in ancient writings.

20. Most of us are familiar with Matthew 7:1-5. How does this text relate to what Paul is saying in verse 1?

21. According to verse 2, how do people justify passing judgment on others? (see Commentary)

22. In verse 3 Paul poses the following rhetorical question: “Do you imagine, whoever you are, that when you judge those who do such things and yet do them yourself, you will escape the judgment of God?” Read and record Jeremiah 17:10.

23. In verse 4, Paul asks “Or do you despise the riches of his kindness and forbearance and patience?” According to the end of verse 4, what is the reason for God’s kindness?

24. CONNECTION: We often quote the scripture “Do not judge, so that you may not be judged...” and yet we often forget that there is more to that verse. As we just read, we too shall be judged by how we judge. And yet there are times when we could and should help another by pointing out bad choices or teaching appropriate behavior. Is intervening always judging? How do we know when we should intervene?

What we say and do should be based in prayer and the Word of God. Read and record 2 Timothy 4:2 and pray today that we continue to listen to God with our minds and hearts.

DAY FIVE

Read Romans 2:5-8

25. Paul continues to write to the Jewish Christians in Rome whom he is admonishing for misinterpreting the patience God has shown them, as his chosen people. (see Commentary) In your own words, describe what you think it means to have a “hardened heart” (in some translations, “an impenitent heart”).

26. Remembering that this section is referred to as, “the Righteous Judgment of God” what is the future for those who are unrepentant and what will be revealed that they will endure (verse 5)?

27. According to verse 6 what will each person receive?

28. In verse 7 Paul says that those who do good are in turn seeking glory, honor and immortality through perseverance in good works. What is the ultimate gift that God will grant to these people?

29. Paul writes that those who are self-seeking and obey not the truth, but follow wickedness, will receive wrath and fury (verse 8). How would you envision the wrath and fury they will receive from God?

30. CONNECTION: In verse 8, Paul warns that for those who “obey not the truth, but (obey) wickedness, there will be wrath and fury.” Obedience is not a popular concept in our culture today. Each person wants to do his or her own thing, in his or her own way. Like disobedient children, we sometimes think we know better: better than God, better than his Word, better than his Church. Obedience in small things teaches us obedience in the more important things. Describe a time, large or small, when you decided to do things your own way, and later realized that obedience would have been the better way. What does obedience to God mean to you?

Read and record Deuteronomy 5:33. Let these thoughts lead you into writing a prayer.

DAY SIX

Read Romans 2:9-11

31. Today's passage opens with Paul repeating the thought he expressed in verse 8 (there will be glory, honor and peace for all who do good). In verse 9 he specifically adds Jews and Greeks. Why might Paul use this particular order when naming these two groups?

32. Verse 10 is almost a repeat of verse 7 but Paul uses a different word for one of the three gifts. What is the new word and what could the change of wording signify to you?

33. What is the final gift which Paul mentions in verse 7 but leaves out in verse 10?

34. In verse 11 Paul states that "There is no partiality with God." Read Msgr. Mikesch's Commentary regarding verse 11 and comment on what you think is meant by these words.

35. From our own world, what example can you give that illustrates verse 11?

36. CONNECTION: Do you ever worry about being treated fairly? Jesus manifested God's impartiality by loving each person he met. He was not impressed by material wealth, nor was he ashamed to mingle with the poor. Call to mind someone you know who seems to possess the virtue of acceptance and unconditional love. Briefly describe how this trait is exemplified.

Read Colossians 3:12-14. Let your love lead you into prayer.

Read pages 13-17 in the Commentary by Rev. Msgr. Gregory R. Mikesch, M. Div., M.A. The Cornerstone Catholic Scripture Study acknowledges that scripture quotations in this study are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, Catholic Edition. Copyright 1989, Division of Christian Education of the National Council of Churches of Christ in the United States of America. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

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