

## Romans 1B

- Now we return to the beginning of Paul's essay on righteousness
  - Beginning with his theme statement:

[Rom. 1:16](#) ¶ For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

[Rom. 1:17](#) For in it *the* righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, " BUT THE RIGHTEOUS *man* SHALL LIVE BY FAITH."

- We already looked last week at why Paul was saying he was not ashamed
  - He was unafraid to preach the gospel anywhere because it was the power of God for salvation
    - Salvation to everyone who believes
  - Then he gives his theme statement or topic sentence
    - Comes from Habbukuk 2:4

[Hab. 2:4](#) ¶ "Behold, as for the proud one,  
His soul is not right within him;  
But the righteous will live by his faith.

- Has a dual meaning
  - The righteous live by faith
    - The righteous man lives eternally by faith (justification)
    - The righteous man lives (i.e., walks) by faith in the Gospel day to day (sanctification)
- Look at Paul's theme carefully
  - It = gospel = salvation = deliverance
  - The righteousness (dikaiosune) of God
    - What does Paul mean by this phrase?
      - The word literally means justice

- It's meaning in the NT comes principally from the OT Hebrew understanding of the word
  - First, it means being declared innocent in a law court – justified
    - And act by a God, our judge to remove guilt
  - Secondly, it describes an attribute of God
    - His perfection manifest
  - Third, it means God's faithfulness to His promises
- So salvation is found in the righteousness of God
  - Meaning our vindication before God
  - Ultimately, our obtaining of God's sinlessness
  - God's faithfulness to His promises
- All three of these is revealed from faith to faith
  - God reveals His righteousness – on all three levels – every time faith is established
    - From faith to faith
    - From the first person to believe to the last person to believe and all in between
  - Each new believer is another opportunity for God's righteousness to be revealed
- So Paul says he preaches the Gospel because it was the means of revealing God's righteousness through the faith of men
  - So we might expect Paul to immediately drive into a discussion of how this process works
    - How does the righteousness of God get revealed in us through faith
    - But Paul doesn't go there....not yet
      - Jump to 3:21-22

- But before we get there, Paul introduces another discussion
- You see, there's a problem
  - We don't recognize that we need God's righteousness revealed in us
  - We're too distracted by the perception that we have own righteousness
- Are you a good person?

[Luke 18:18](#) ¶ A ruler questioned Him, saying, "Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?"

[Luke 18:19](#) And Jesus said to him, "Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone.

- Here's Paul ready to give the most thorough explanation of men reach heaven
  - How they become good in the true sense of the word
  - How the righteousness of God is revealed in them
    - But rarely is a person ready to admit and believe the truth about themselves
      - They are not good
      - They are 100% bad
      - Is your nature better than another person?
      - Better than Hitler?
        - Have you hated?
        - Then you have murdered
  - Only God alone is good, Jesus says
    - Good is not a sliding scale
      - It's a point = God
    - You are not God, therefore you are not good
      - You are 100% bad

- Therefore, you and I need God to reveal His righteousness
- So Paul sets about proving that God's righteousness is revealed through the Gospel by emphasizing our need first
  - To begin, does it even matter if we are righteous? Do we need God to reveal righteousness through the Gospel?
    - The clearest way to make that clear is to show how God responds to unrighteousness
    - And not just in eternal terms, but here and now

[Rom. 1:18](#) ¶ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, [Rom. 1:19](#) because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.

[Rom. 1:20](#) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

[Rom. 1:21](#) For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

[Rom. 1:22](#) Professing to be wise, they became fools, [Rom. 1:23](#) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.

- You notice Paul is now talking about how wrath is revealed (rather than righteousness)?
- As we consider Paul's argument here, notice first where Paul begins
  - Does he name a group of people specifically?
    - No...he speaks about all men
  - God's wrath – his hatred of sin – is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness in men
    - Not in heaven, once we face Him
    - But even now it is revealed
  - Ungodliness (irreverence, opposition to God)
  - Unrighteousness (evil, wickedness)

- Suppression of the truth in unrighteousness
  - By who they are and how they live, they effectively hold down the truth
  - They perpetuate a lie
    - The lie is that men can give worship to something other than God and escape His wrath
- God's wrath is revealed against them because mankind can instinctively understand God is evident yet nevertheless reject Him
  - God made Himself evident to men
    - Evident is phaneroo, which means became visible
  - First His invisible attributes are visible in the creation itself

[Psa. 19:1](#) ¶ The heavens are telling of the glory of God;  
And their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.

[Psa. 19:2](#) Day to day pours forth speech,  
And night to night reveals knowledge.

[Psa. 19:3](#) There is no speech, nor are there words;  
Their voice is not heard.

[Psa. 19:4](#) Their line has gone out through all the earth,  
And their utterances to the end of the world.  
In them He has placed a tent for the sun,

- You can understand a lot about God by examining what has been made, Paul says in verse 20
  - A God of power (fear Him)
  - A God of order, not chaos (we can know God and understand Him)
  - A God of mercy (provision for men)
  - A God of purpose (we were created to know and follow Him)
  - A God of wrath against rebellion (there will be an accounting, Paul will show that now)
- Therefore, mankind is without the excuse that God never revealed Himself nor His expectations

- Were it not for our foolish hearts, we could know God well enough to follow Him
- What's more, not only did God reveal Himself in the creation itself, but specifically men once knew God personally (verse 21)
  - Who knew God?
  - Adam, Eve, Cain, others knew God truthfully
    - Verse 21 says they knew God, they didn't honor Him as God or give thanks
      - They rebelled
      - And over time the rebellion grew
- Despite knowing Him,
  - First they didn't honor Him
  - Then they didn't give Him thanks
  - Then they became futile in speculations
    - Futile means vain
    - Saw themselves in an unrealistically positive way
    - Speculations were reasonings, opinions
    - So vain opinions began to replace the truth of God
  - Their hearts were darkened
    - Professing to know the truth in wisdom, men were actually getting more stupid in things pertaining to God
    - The first step in rebellion was intentional ignorance
- The second step in rebellion was idolatry
  - And the height of ignorance is found in the way men exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for a man-made idol
  - Do you want to see how quickly this happened?

[Gen. 4:25](#) ¶ Adam had relations with his wife again; and she gave birth to a son, and named him Seth, for, *she said*, "God has appointed me another offspring in place of Abel, for Cain killed him."

[Gen. 4:26](#) To Seth, to him also a son was born; and he called his name Enosh. Then *men* began to call upon the name of the LORD.

- Enosh was born 235 years after the fall
  - For 235 years, men didn't call upon the name of the Lord
    - Adam knew the Lord and lived during this time
    - Yet for as long as our country has existed, men failed to call upon the Lord

[Gen. 6:5](#) ¶ Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually.

[Gen. 6:6](#) The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart.

[Gen. 6:7](#) The LORD said, " I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them."

[Gen. 6:8](#) But Noah found favor in the eyes of the LORD.

- When Noah's father was alive, Adam was still alive
  - In other words, the wickedness of earth was great, and yet the first man was still alive on earth
    - That's why Paul can say that though men knew God,
      - They had an eye witness who could explain everything
      - They departed from that truth and devised their own foolish opinions
- So what did God do?

[Rom. 1:24](#) ¶ Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

[Rom. 1:25](#) For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

[Rom. 1:26](#) ¶ For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

[Rom. 1:27](#) and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

[Rom. 1:28](#) ¶ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

[Rom. 1:29](#) being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips,

[Rom. 1:30](#) slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

[Rom. 1:31](#) without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

[Rom. 1:32](#) and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

- The result of their futile speculations and wickedness was that God gave them over to their lusts
  - This led to the third and final stage of rebellion: impurity or depravity
    - But God gave them over to this stage
  - Here's the connection to Paul's discussion of righteousness
    - Look again at verses 17 & 18
    - Just as God's righteousness is revealed in the Gospel being received in faith
    - Also, the negative is true:
      - God reveals His wrath for unrighteousness by giving men over to their lusts so that their bodies would become a dishonor to them
      - The righteous live by faith, and the unrighteous see the penalty of their sin even in their day (nevermind eternity)
  - Because they have exchanged the truth for the lie
    - God gave them over to their physical lusts

- They exchanged natural affection for unnatural
  - He lists examples of women and men seeking unnatural relationships
  - Are these the only kinds of degrading passions?
    - More likely, they represent the height of depravity
    - They were also common in Paul's day within the Roman empire
    - Typified the worst of the worst
  - They showed how the lie of worshipping creation rather than God corrupted them to the point where they even abused their own bodies
- They received the penalty of their behavior in their bodies
  - God has instituted certain consequences for depravity
    - Physical weaknesses, disease, suffering
    - Emotional pain, abusive relationships
- Verse 28, as they disapproved God in their minds, so He also gave them over to depraved (disapproved) minds
  - Their minds led them to all manner of greed, envy, murder, strife, malice
  - These people throughout history have been haters, murderers, arrogant, insolent, boastful, inventors of evil...
    - This list captures the whole of humanity
    - The slide we're all on began at Adam and has continued unabated throughout human history
      - Humanity believes a lie, imagines God according to their own opinions, worships what they see rather than an unseen God
      - And God reveals His wrath against disobedience by turning men over to lustful hearts and depraved minds

- And the final stage is that men would approve the same wickedness that they themselves practice
- Doesn't this describe the world we know today?
  - And all the sin you see in the world today, all the bad things that mark our world are the result of disobedient men and women
    - Hearts turned from God, self-deceived and receiving the penalty of their sin
    - People who have turned from God are fundamentally unable to feel or think correctly about God
    - They have become darkened and cannot rescue themselves
- What conclusion do we make from Paul's opening?

[Rom. 2:1](#) ¶ Therefore you have no excuse, everyone of you who passes judgment, for in that which you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

[Rom. 2:2](#) And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things.

- All men are guilty and we are all under the same sentence of condemnation
- Next week we move deeper
  - Instead of talking about mankind, Paul moves closer to his readers
    - Gentiles vs. Jews