

## Romans 1C

- Paul has launched into an explanation for why we should care about the topic of righteousness
  - He established that righteousness is the key to eternal life
    - The righteous man shall live by faith
    - And the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith
  - But why is it that we should concern ourselves with the “righteousness of God?”
    - Can’t we stand on our own, by our own worth?
- Rather than talk about how righteousness is revealed, Paul begins with a story...a history lesson
  - Of how unrighteousness dominates men
  - And how God responds to unrighteousness
- Paul began by talking about all men
  - That God’s wrath – his hatred of sin – is revealed from heaven against all unrighteousness in men
    - And His wrath is revealed not (only) in heaven when men stand before their Maker
    - But even now, God’s wrath is revealed “from heaven”
  - Against all...
    - Ungodliness (irreverence, opposition to God)
    - Unrighteousness (evil, wickedness)
  - Against men who suppress 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
- Finally, Paul said that men are without excuse for their opposition to God and pursuit of evil
  - They can't say they didn't know that they were accountable
  - They could understand enough about God from what has been made to be held accountable
    - That doesn't mean that they knew enough to understand how to be saved
    - Paul isn't talking about redemption yet
    - Only the inexcusable nature of man's guilt before God

[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.

- What's more, not only did God reveal Himself in the creation itself, but specifically men once knew God personally (verse 21)
  - Knew is ginosko (Gnostics) = means to understand, perceive

[John 6:69](#) "We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God."

[John 5:42](#) but I know you, that you do not have the love of God in yourselves.

- So who knew God in this way?
  - Adam, Eve, Cain, others in their day 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, they didn't honor Him
  - Here is our first insight into the hopelessness of man's condition
    - How many have wished that if God would only reveal Himself to us more fully, we could follow Him much better
      - Give me a burning bush like Moses
      - Give me a star to follow like the wise men
- In other words, we sometimes attribute our lack of obedience to a lack of clarity in our understanding of who God is and what He wants from us
  - Like the story in Luke 16

[Luke 16:20](#) "And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores,

[Luke 16:21](#) and longing to be fed with the *crumbs* which were falling from the rich man's table; besides, even the dogs were coming and licking his sores.

[Luke 16:22](#) "Now the poor man died and was carried away by the angels to Abraham's bosom; and the rich man also died and was buried.

[Luke 16:23](#) "In Hades he lifted up his eyes, being in torment, and saw Abraham far away and Lazarus in his bosom.

[Luke 16:24](#) "And he cried out and said, 'Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus so that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool off my tongue, for I am in agony in this flame.'

[Luke 16:25](#) "But Abraham said, 'Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony.

[Luke 16:26](#) 'And besides all this, between us and you there is a great chasm fixed, so that those who wish to come over from here to you will not be able, and *that* none may cross over from there to us.'

[Luke 16:27](#) "And he said, 'Then I beg you, father, that you send him to my father's house —

[Luke 16:28](#) for I have five brothers — in order that he may warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.'

[Luke 16:29](#) "But Abraham said, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them hear them.'

[Luke 16:30](#) "But he said, 'No, father Abraham, but if someone goes to them from the dead, they will repent!'

[Luke 16:31](#) "But he said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be persuaded even if someone rises from the dead.'"

- The rich man insisted that if God would only present a convincing display to his brothers, it would convince them to change their ways and follow God
  - Abraham says no
    - Not because it's not proper
    - Or its outside the rules
      - Rather, it wouldn't work
      - Men in their foolishness think that our choices would be different in the face of a convincing demonstration of God's power or presence
      - Scripture says that human nature doesn't find the truth of God through miraculous displays
      - We only come to know and follow God truly and fully through His word
- And in Romans 1 Paul offers his own proof of that same principle
  - Though men knew God, still they didn't honor Him
  - If Adam and Eve and Cain and all the rest of that day could know God so well,
    - And yet not choose to honor Him
    - How can we expect to do better?
    - We are doomed to the same dishonoring relationship
    - Just like the brothers in the story from Luke, we can only return to obedience through God's word
- Paul says mankind's descent into unrighteousness followed a specific pattern
  - 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
  - As result, their hearts were darkened
    - Professing to know the truth in wisdom, men were actually became more stupid in things pertaining to God
- So, the first step in rebellion was intentional disregard of God
  - Then substituting speculation for the truth,
  - Which produced a darkened heart
- After the heart is darkened concerning the truth, the second step in rebellion comes: idolatry
  - Because 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 a time equal to as long as our country has existed, men failed to call upon the Lord
- But it gets worse...

[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,
  - There were eye witnesses who knew God and could have explained the truth
    - Nevertheless, they departed from that truth and devised their own foolish opinions about God
    - And then they fashioned God according to their own speculations, producing idolatry
- So what did God when He witnessed their darkened hearts enter into full rebellion and idolatry?

[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 unrighteous ways
  - This led to the third and final stage of rebellion: impurity or depravity
  - Look at the repeating phrase in those verses
    - God gave is repeated three times

- First to their lusts of the heart
- Second to the degrading passions (flesh)
- Third to depraved mind
- God removed His grace, which was a restraint against their nature
  - In effect, He said if you wish to ignore Me and worship a god of your own desire,
    - Then as a form of judgment, I will show you what your desires will produce
- Look back 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 themselves
    - The righteous live by faith, but unrighteousness receives its just penalty
- Look more closely at the pattern uses here
  - He argues from what they didn't do, meaning what they should have done was:
    - Know God → worship God → Glorify God
  - Instead, they:
    - Don't know (honor) God → worship the creations (idols) → Dishonor the body & seek glory for their deeds
  - Now look at the pattern reflected in the text
    - Verse 21 (know God, honor God)
    - Verse 23 (exchanged His glory for idols)
    - Verse 24 (therefore, God allowed them to dishonor their bodies)

- The specific depravity Paul mentions stands as an example of the extreme
  - They exchanged natural affection for unnatural
    - He lists examples of women and men seeking unnatural relationships
    - Are these the only kinds of degrading passions?
      - They represent the height of depravity
      - They were also common in Paul's day within the Roman empire
        - Typified the worst of the worst
  - In their corruption, Paul says men abused even their own bodies
    - Therefore, they received the penalty of their behavior in their bodies
      - Physical weaknesses, disease, suffering
      - Emotional pain, abusive relationships
- In verse 28, Paul wraps up by describing these people as displaying all manner of greed, envy, murder, strife, malice
  - We know people throughout history have been haters, murderers, arrogant, insolent, boastful, inventors of evil...
    - Therefore, 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
  - We have no excuse for our depravity
    - We can't blame God because He was there in the beginning when men left Him
    - We can't blame other men, or even Adam, because all men repeat this pattern in their own lives
  - Paul says we who pass judgment on others condemn ourselves
    - When we say other men deserve God's wrath for what they do, we pronounce our own sentence
      - Because we all do the same things
      - There is no one good except God alone
    - If one man is due judgment for sin, then all men are due it because we share the same patterns
- And because God alone is good, all men deserve the judgment of God
  - Are you more interested in obtaining the righteousness of God?