



Finer Grounds Bible Study

Romans

Lesson 3: Romans 1:18-2:11

If you have spent any time around children at all, I'm sure you are no stranger to excuses. From the age old, "the dog ate my homework," to the classic, "he made me do it," I am sure we have all heard some doozies over the years. While it is easy to roll our eyes and shake our heads at the adorably valiant efforts of little ones to skirt their responsibilities, what about things like, "that's just not my talent." Or, "I know we should be at worship on Sundays, but that's our only day to sleep in and spend time as a family." Or, "I know Scripture says _____, but I just don't believe a loving God would punish someone for that."

Throughout this entire passage Paul draws powerful comparisons between those who blatantly ignore God's word, and those who continue to skirt the teachings of Scripture while claiming to be followers of Christ. The bottom line is this: as Paul states in Romans 1:20 and 2:1 we are without excuse. On the day of judgment, we will not be able to stand before the Almighty and say, "Well, I planned to get my life right later." Or, "I know I should have been more involved in the work of the church, there just wasn't enough time." Whether we have been raised in the church or never set foot in a church building, we are without excuse. God has provided everything we need for a soul who is seeking truth to find their way to Him.

Before reading this section, what are your thoughts on sin and judgment? Do you believe that all men are accountable to God's expectations?

Before reading this passage, ask yourself if you have been offering God excuses for why you can't, or won't, do what He expects of you.

Read Romans 1:18-2:11 and look for any key words or phrases.

Read Romans 1:18

Paul begins by reminding us of the severe consequences of ungodliness and unrighteousness: the wrath of God. I also think it's important to note that this passage specifies all ungodliness and all unrighteousness. I think one of the most dangerous excuses we make as Christians is to compare our lives to the world, rather than Christ. When we look at the world we feel good about ourselves and pat ourselves on



Finer Grounds Bible Study

the back, while at times ignoring just how hard our hearts may have become, or how far from Christ's example we truly are in our lives. Yet God's wrath has already been revealed to us from Heaven. He has made His expectations of mankind clear, and He has also made clear the consequences of not living in obedience to Him. Why is this so important? Because not only will we experience the wrath of God when we live an unrighteous life, but we are also suppressing the truth.

Gandhi is quoted as having said, "I like your Christ, I do not like your Christians. Your Christians are so unlike your Christ," (Goodreads). Sisters, when our attitudes and actions at home with our husband and children do not line up with Scripture, we are suppressing the Gospel. When our attitudes and actions at work do not line up with Scripture, we are suppressing the Gospel. When our attitudes and actions at our children's ball games do not line up with Scripture, we are suppressing the Gospel. May it never be said of us that as Christians we are so unlike our Christ, because otherwise the consequence is severe.

What are ways that we can suppress the truth if we are not careful?

Do we make excuses for our ungodly attitudes as wives, mothers, and Christian women?

Take some time and give serious thought to your attitudes and actions in each aspect of your life. Are you truly reflecting Christ? If not determine today to make changes, and even apologies if needed.

Read Romans 1:19-20

This passage is both thrilling and terrifying. It is amazing to think about the great lengths our Creator has gone to in order to show Himself to us. His eternal power is found in the vastness of the Universe and in the beautiful fragility of a butterfly's wing. His divine nature is seen in our ability to experience emotions such as joy and love, and in the awe, we feel as we look at our children and wonder at the miracle of life.

Sisters, we are without excuse. However, in this context Paul isn't just referring to believers, but to the fact that all mankind is without excuse. God has made Himself clearly known to all, even the unrighteous and ungodly. When we stand before the judgment seat of God, we will all be without excuse,



Finer Grounds Bible Study

because God has made Himself clearly known to us.

Read Romans 1:21-25

Here we have a progression of unrighteousness: not honoring God → not being thankful to God for what he has done for us → futile thinking based on the ways of man → darkened hearts → being wise in our own eyes → idolatry → a life of depravity. What really breaks my heart is that we can see this exact cycle playing out in our society every single day. It began with not honoring God as supreme when evolution entered the school system. Then we were taught we didn't need to thank God for things because really, we did it ourselves. From there we "realized" that we really don't even need God, and hearts began to harden to the truth. As a society we then became "enlightened" to the point that people began to elevate their own ideas and morality above that of Scripture. Which lead to idolatry in various forms overrunning our country, paving the way for depravity and the utter loss of shame and guilt.

It is absolutely vital that we honor God as holy and authoritative in all that we do. Nebuchadnezzar was made to live as a beast of the field because he failed to honor God as holy. Nadab and Abihu were consumed by fire for not honoring God as holy. Moses was denied entrance to the Promised Land for failing to honor God as holy. Yes, it is that serious.

Are there areas of your life where you struggle to honor God as holy by submitting to His will?

The second step of this progression is failing to thank God for the blessings He has given us. In what ways can you be more intentional in giving God the praise and glory on a daily basis?

Read Romans 1:26-32

What was the immediate consequence of choosing to worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator? God gave man up to do as he saw fit. This sounds remarkably like Judges 17:6, "Everyone did what was right in his own eyes." (If you'll remember, it did not end well in Judges either.) Specifically, in the context of Romans 1, Paul is referring to giving them up to the sin of homosexuality, which is described in detail here.

Anymore we are inundated with the ideas of "sexual orientation," "gender identity," and "equality" on a daily basis. Literally every day for the last week I have seen a new article on some movie, actor or television show that is promoting the homosexual lifestyle. What the LGBTQ agenda fails to realize is that we are already equal, we are equally accountable to God for the decisions that we make. As much as people like to claim that there is nothing



Finer Grounds Bible Study

unnatural about homosexuality, or that they were born unable to help living this lifestyle, the adjectives used in verses 26-27 are very blatant: dishonorable, contrary to nature and shameless.

I do believe that some of us are born naturally more susceptible to some sins than others. For instance, some individuals are predisposed to alcoholism, pornography, or even gluttony. Yet none of us would argue that it is acceptable to be an alcoholic because an individual struggles more with that temptation than others. I believe that homosexuality is the same. I have met genuine, knowledgeable brethren who struggle with homosexual tendencies. But that is just it; they struggle. While society is ready and willing to make excuses for how these individuals are powerless against their struggle with homosexuality, these individuals acknowledge that homosexuality is sinful and proactively protect themselves, some going so far as to willingly remain abstinent their entire lives.

Even if we do not personally struggle with this sin it is important that we show compassion for those who do, and that we remember that we are also tempted with sin even if our sin is not as obvious as others. At the same time, we absolutely cannot condone something that God has clearly spoken against. Paul elaborates more on this as we continue in the text.

Read Romans 1:28-32

This word “debased” literally means, “abhorred by God.” What does this debased mind lead to? A laundry list of sinful behaviors: envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness, gossip, slander, hating God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Ouch. That is quite a list.

Read over this list several times and see what you notice.

While we tend to categorize sin, here God puts murder right beside envy. He puts slander and gossip right beside hating God. He puts inventing evil right beside being disobedient to parents. What can we learn from this?



Finer Grounds Bible Study

As a therapist I deal with families who are hurting on a daily basis. A remarkable number of the families who come to see me are being managed by the idea of keeping the children happy, rather than demanding obedience from the children. What can we learn about our expectations of our children and parenting, based on God's expectations in this passage? Do we excuse our children's inappropriate attitudes/behaviors, or do we strive to correct it?

Paul sums this section up in verse 32, "Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them." He has thoroughly established the idea that God has made Himself known to man, and therefore we are without excuse. Yet here he is reminding us one more time that these individuals know God's decrees, they know that these behaviors are sinful, yet they are choosing to engage in them anyway. But he doesn't stop there. Notice the end of the verse, "but give approval to those who practice them."

Many times over the last several years I have heard brethren make comments such as, "Well, I don't really think homosexuality is the best, but people should be able to live like they want." Or, "Who am I to tell people they can't do what they want." Or not say anything

at all and stand idly by while sin is blatantly promoted. The hard truth is that this puts us solidly in the camp of giving approval to those who practice sin.

Sisters, even if we are not personally engaging in a sinful lifestyle, God holds us just as accountable if we in any way give approval to those who are. If we truly love those around us, we will not condone sin in any form. If we are truly striving to think souls as Christ did, our compassion and love will not allow us to sit idly by while those we love are on the path to Hell. There is no excuse for our sin, and there is no excuse for ignoring sin in the lives of those we love.

As Christians, what are ways we can personally and publicly take a stand against sin?

Are there areas in which you have intentionally, or unintentionally given approval to sin? How can you make it right?

Read Romans 2:1-5

In chapter one Paul reminded the brethren at Rome of the serious consequences of sin. It's almost as if he intentionally set the stage for the brethren to be pointing their fingers at those horrible,



Finer Grounds Bible Study

worldly people, and then wham! Just like Nathan with King David, “You are the man!” Paul has switched from “they” and “them,” to a very pointed “you!” “Every one of you who judges,” “do you suppose,” “do you presume,” and “you have no excuse.”

This section is very similar to Galatians four when Paul uses the example of Hagar and Sarah. He begins by comparing Hagar and Sarah in a way that had the Jews nodding in agreement about those horrible children of the slave woman Hagar (Gentiles), just for Paul to switch it on them and say, “You think the children of Hagar are bad? Guess what, you are the children of Hagar!” Here he is taking the same approach, “Oh, you want to judge those in the world? Guess what, you’re just as bad as they are!”

Especially from this perspective, the variety of the sins listed at the end of chapter one makes perfect sense. While it’s doubtful that the brethren at Rome were murderers or practicing homosexuals (sins it’s easy to point a finger at) it’s very likely that they were envious, boastful or gossips. Paul’s point here is that it’s not okay for the Christians to sit in judgment of the world while continuing to have sinful attitudes and behaviors themselves. He is reminding them that although God is patient and kind, that kindness will not be applied to those who have hearts hardened by unrepentant sin.

Have you ever been guilty of putting on your “church face” and acting like everything is perfect when you walk in the doors on Sunday morning? How might this affect those in the world who visit our services?

It appears that the Roman Christians were, in some ways, holding the world to a higher standard than they were holding themselves to. Are we ever guilty of the same?

Read Romans 2:6-11

Paul is telling us that our eternity will be determined by our works. It’s important to note here how Paul uses the word “works” throughout this letter. He is not referring to works of merit by which we try to earn our salvation, but rather works of Christ. Basically, are we going to choose to serve ourselves, or to serve God, because we can’t do both.

Should we choose to obey unrighteousness and live a self-seeking life, because we are without excuse and know better, in the end we will be met with God’s wrath and fury. But there is hope! If we are patient and seek glory and incorruptibility, God will bless us with eternal life. The words here are interesting: glory has the implication



Finer Grounds Bible Study

of glorifying God with our life.

“Incorruptibility” would be better translated “immortality.” Paul is telling us that if we live now in a way that focuses on glorifying and honoring God (remember the first step in the progression of unrighteousness was not glorifying God) then He will reward us with eternal life with Him.

Finally, he concludes by reminding us that God doesn’t show partiality. His laws and expectations are the same for the Jew and the Greek. God’s judgment will be the same for every human who lives in rebellion to His laws, and His blessings will be the same for all who live faithfully for Him.

If we are honest, are our standards and expectations of people different than God’s? Do we expect more of some people than others?

According to Paul, God’s wrath awaits those who are living in rebellion to Him. Reach out to one person this week who is not living in obedience to Scripture and share the Gospel with them. Make sure to pray for them to have an open heart daily.

- <https://www.goodreads.com/quotes/22155-i-like-your-christ-i-do-not-like-your-christians>