

Romans
Message 19
Not Ashamed 06
Rom 1:13-19

- 13 Now I would not have you ignorant, brethren, that oftentimes I purposed to come unto you, (but was let hitherto,) that I might have some fruit among you also, even as among other Gentiles.
- 14 I am debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise.
- 15 So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also.
- 16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.
- 17 For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith: as it is written, The just shall live by faith.
- 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;
- 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them. KJV

You will recall that Paul has given his greeting to the Roman church and then has turned his attention toward the reason he has been desiring to come to them and what he is intending to do when he arrives, preach the gospel to them, v.15.

He has now turned his attention to the Gospel itself and has been introducing his perspective on it to his readers. It may be that he either knows or suspects that there is some deficiency of understanding among the Romans, given the fact that he is setting out on an exhaustive explanation of this core doctrine of Christianity which he will pursue all the way to the beginning of Chapter 12 where he is to turn his attention to the Christian's duty of service to God flowing out from the truths of the gospel.

Most recently we have been discussing Vs. 17,18 and the topics of the Righteousness of God, the revelation of the Gospel 'from Faith to Faith,' the Wrath of God and the joint issues of ungodliness and unrighteousness of men.

Today we come to a sort of end of the statement he has made concerning the Gospel, but it is also the heading of the next topic. This is the way Paul's mind worked as he wrote. There is almost always a smooth segue from one topic to the next, a sort of a 'thought-flow' type of writing style which causes many to miss important elements of the text. An additional challenge presented by his style is that he is almost impossible to outline since there are very few definite and definable 'breaks' in his presentation.

But, let us look at this conclusion/new heading that we find in the end of v.18.

- 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, **who hold the truth in unrighteousness;**

We want to consider the words here carefully because Paul is about to launch into a large section of his letter which will carry us all the way to 3:20 and in this section of his letter he is going to exhaustively detail all of the ways that men do what he is talking about here.

“Who hold the Truth in Unrighteousness”

“*who the truth in unrighteousness hold*” (word for word translation)

In the structure of the sentence, this phrase is defining those against whom the anger of God burns and the reason there is a distinction is that, as has been true since the days of Seth, not every person is held as an object of God’s anger. There are some who love and embrace “the Truth” and do not oppose it. The majority of humanity fits in this description for sure, but not all.

I think we will take the word order as it appears in the original text but we really need to understand these three words so that we can make sense of the phrase... and we absolutely need to understand the phrase. It is critical to our understanding of the Gospel itself.

Truth -

By ‘truth’ Paul did not mean scripture, the specific revelation of God to man through His prophets and ultimately through His apostles.

Concerning the word “truth”... “The truth here is not the gospel, for all men do not possess a knowledge of it. The truth here is found in the context, the fact of a supreme Being with Divine attributes to whom worship and obedience are due, this truth being seen by all men through their observation of the created univers, the latter demanding a Creator to answer for its existence. The human race, possessing this truth, yet holds it down in the sense of refusing to acknowledge its moral implications, and goes on in its sin.” Wuest, Word Studies in the Greek New Testament, Vol 1, p.29

If that were true then God was only angry with the Jews and those few Gentiles (comparatively) with whom they had shared the scriptures. They were the only ones to whom Scripture had been given and, thus, the only ones who could resist Scripture, if that were what he was talking about.

If that were the case then a real argument could be made for hiding the scriptures from people and never publishing them. If they were never exposed to them, they could not sin against God in relation to them. It would be wronging them to take the scriptures and put them in the place of stirring the anger of God against themselves.

But it is obvious that Paul has the whole world in view, the vast reach of the wrath of God against every man who has sinned against Him regarding His revelation to them.

Paul defined this truth in the following verses.

Rom 1:19-20

- 19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.
- 20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse: KJV

There are things “which may be known of (concerning) God” and those things are available to every person born with the ability to perceive His Creation... “understood by the things that are made...”

That may be a new idea to you. Paul is affirming that every person who sees what God has made is able to draw some reasonable deductions from those observations.... “His Eternal Power and Godhead.”

Consider some things with me.

1. It is obvious that chaos does not create order. Order does not occur accidentally... it can only exist as a result of being intentionally made.
2. That which, then, is intentionally made was made by Intelligence and by Power. The sheer vastness of the world and the universe beyond insists that we recognize Vast Intelligence and Unlimited Power if we are to attribute all that has been made to one Source.
3. But Intelligence demands Personhood. We have never at all ever experienced Intelligence not associated with a Person. There are no machines that are ‘intelligent’ in the way we are discussing. They are machines which simply respond to a series of programs or algorithms that have been installed into them.
4. A Person with the kind of Intelligence and Power to create the Universe is by definition Deity and Deity that Creates also Owns all that He has created with unimpeachable prerogatives.
5. And intelligent creatures, such as man, recognizing those facts would be expected to seek to know this Deity, know His Purpose and His Will, and then once knowing them to labor to do them.

This seems to be the place that Paul is operating from, the kinds of ideas circulating in his mind when he uses the phrase... “that which may be known of God.”

It is only logical that man would seek after Him.

This was the case he laid out for the Athenians, remember?

Acts 17:24-27

- 24 **God that made the world and all things therein**, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;
- 25 Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;
- 26 **And hath made of one blood all nations of men** for to dwell on all the face of

the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;

27 ***That (to the purpose that) they should seek the Lord***, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:
KJV

This is “that which may be known of God.” Now, not only has God made it visible and obvious that He has made all of this, He has given to man a mind capable of processing these realities. The refusal to embrace these reasonable and logical conclusions is a part of the reason for God’s anger.

Consider the goodness of God revealed in Creation.

It is ordered so that men can grow crops sufficient to feed their families and have more to sell for their profit and advancement.

There is plenty of raw materials in creation for men to build sturdy homes, communities and even cities.

There is ore to refine for every need.

There are herbs for many of the sicknesses of man.

And... there is beauty beyond man’s capacity even to appreciate, vast, glorious and wonderful.

God is Good, Omnipotent and Wise. Such a Being is worthy of the devotion and worship of man, there is no question.

But man by unrighteous deeds suppresses, holds down and resists that Truth, preferring to worship things he has made, creatures of God rather than God.

Unrighteousness

First of all, let us remember how we have already defined ‘unrighteousness.’ We distinguished it from ‘ungodliness’ if you will recall, saying that ‘ungodliness’ is a disposition of the mind and heart while ‘unrighteousness’ is the behavior that flows out of the disposition. We pointed out that the only way a deed can be considered righteous is if it flows out of motives which embrace and are devoted to the Glory of God. Otherwise they are meaningless at best and wicked at worst.

What Paul is going to be laying before our minds in the coming section here in Romans is the **behavior** of man, flowing of course out of a wicked **disposition**, but it is action that is here being considered.

Having received the knowledge of the Power and Deity of God, man has behaved wickedly and that is the problem. It is a universal sin and one which God is determined to judge. It is an

offense to His Person on the deepest level imaginable.

Heb 10:26-27

26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins,

27 But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. KJV

To sin after having received information from God concerning any matter is a Treason of the highest sort for any intelligent creature. The only foreview such a one can have is a Judgment of “*fiery indignation.*” I am quite sure that no human comprehends the intensity of Anger of which God is capable.

But Paul is clear, God is angry because man has behaved unrighteously concerning Truth. But, what exactly have men done?

Hold the Truth in unrighteousness -

They take wicked actions which resist, contradict, oppose, suppress and seek to overthrow the Truth that God is and that He is worthy of worship.

This is one of those words that was used in a variety of ways by the Greeks.

Rom 1:18 who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, NASU

Rom 1:18 who hinder the truth in unrighteousness; ASV

Rom 1:18 who by their wickedness suppress the truth RSV

It is not that men passively *hold* the truth in their minds without acting on it, they are being accused here, by Paul, of *actively suppressing* the Truth through wicked actions and he will go on to give a number of examples.

Beginning with:

Rom 1:21 “... *when they knew God, they glorified him not as God...*” KJV

This is the very epitome of Unrighteousness flowing from Ungodliness.

They looked at Truth, on some level contemplated the implications, refused to embrace those implications by refusing to “*Glorify Him as God.*”

To know Truth and then to behave wrongly concerning it is High Treason and God is not, cannot be, indifferent to that.

He has made it His business to reveal important Truth to men, sufficient to make them accountable concerning it.

But the privilege of *possessing* Truth means something.

It means that we embrace it,
deal honestly with it,
follow the necessary implications of it.

And... it surely means...

That we do not deal dishonestly with it
do not pervert it,
do not develop false religions and false religions to suppress it.

This is rebellion. It is Unrighteousness flowing out of Ungodliness.

The apostles, as they went out with the gospel, were also finding suppression of Truth rising from the leaders of the pagan religions. More than one of them were murdered by pagans for bringing the gospel to their people. And, many thousands have been murdered over the centuries for the same thing, right up until today.

But, consider how Paul goes on to describe the behavior of men in perverting Truth rather than honoring the God of Truth.

And... he chooses to abuse, confound and pervert the very means that God has given for him to reproduce himself and keep the family of man going.

Paul will lay the charge against them that “when they knew God, they glorified Him not as God.”

The words to describe their resistance to God’s Truth on this matter are almost pornographic by some standards.

Rom 1:24-32

- 24 Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonour their own bodies between themselves:
- 25 Who **changed the truth** of God into a lie, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed for ever. Amen.
- 26 For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature:
- 27 And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.
- 28 And even as **they did not like to retain God in their knowledge**, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;
- 29 Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity; whisperers,
- 30 Backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents,
- 31 Without understanding, covenantbreakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful:
- 32 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.

KJV

Though Paul argues for Total Depravity, he also credits men with knowledge and understanding that goes far beyond what some men think.

One must know truth before he can change it. He must know, on some level, Truth ere he can dislike to retain it in his knowledge. And, he must have some comprehension even of the Judgment of God before he can reject its consequences and try to work around it.

This is the Reason for the Wrath of God against men. Look again at the text.

Rom 1:18-21

- 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;
19 Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath shewed it unto them.
20 For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:
21 Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened. KJV

Let us read from another translation.

Rom 1:18-23

18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by (out from) their wickedness suppress the truth. 19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. 20 Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse; 21 for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened. 22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles. RSV

This is monstrous evil! Extraordinary Wickedness! Committed in the Face of Incontrovertible Evidence that God is, that He is Powerful, and... as we shall see in the next chapter... extraordinarily Holy, demanding Holiness from His Special Creation.

This is the evil behind all other evil. This is the root cause of every form of idolatry, immorality, perversion, and false religion. They did not like to retain God in their Knowledge.

It is the answer to the “Why?” of every question concerning the bizarre and wicked behavior of men. They Suppress the Truth in Unrighteousness.

Paul made no excuses for them and neither should we. Men are not victims of sin they are the perpetrators of it. They may be ignorant of God but on some level it is because they have

suppressed and resisted the truths that have occurred to their minds in their observations of Creation.

Man knows that nothing exists without being made, that order does not come from chaos and that the more enormous and complex a thing is the Greater and Wiser the Creator that formed it. His mind must be forced to embrace a different version of reality.

Man has such revelation, such ability and such a mind given him by his Creator that God is Angry with this nonsense of false religion and immorality.

If this is not what Paul was saying, then I have missed the point altogether.

But there is a thing revealed here which we must not miss. There is a core to all ungodliness and unrighteousness as well as a core to all godliness and righteousness. Get it wrong on either side and God is not pleased.

Rom 1:21 when they knew God, they glorified him not as God KJV
Rom 1:21 even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God, NAS
Rom 1:21 although they knew God they did not honor him as God RSV

To fail to “*honor Him as God*” is the core of all ungodliness and to succeed in *honoring Him as God* is the core of all godliness, the spring from which all righteousness (godly behavior) flows.

This is the element of Worshiping and Serving God that is the beginning point of all things. If it is missed, nothing pleases God and if it is found even a cup of cold water given a thirsty person is so pleasing to Him that He has it recorded in His book to mention at the Great Judgment. But it cannot be considered optional. It is of absolute necessity. It is the mainspring at the center of all deeds on which God looks with favor.

So, now, the inevitable question, “*How does one do that?*”

And in answering that we must return to the Model Prayer. Would Jesus have us pray and miss the most important thing of all? Of course not! Would He have us begin the prayer with anything less than the most important element? Never!

Remember it with me.

Matt 6:9-13
9 After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.
10 Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
11 Give us this day our daily bread.
12 And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
13 And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen. KJV

“Hallowing,” holding as Holy in an absolute way, the Name, the Person, the Authority of God is the pin at the center of all things truly spiritual.

But, finding your way to that place in your soul where this is honestly and completely true is one of the most difficult tasks one can undertake and yet, it must be done.

You may need to discard everything you have ever heard or thought on the matter.

We live in a world in which everyone thinks they “glorify God” and yet very few comprehend what those words even mean.

This means that even if you have never done it, you must give yourself to this endeavor.

There is not time this morning to undertake to treat the matter but the great hurdle you will need to get across is a simple one... not easy... but simple.

Matt 16:24-26

- 24 Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
- 25 For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.
- 26 For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? KJV

You must give yourself, afresh and anew, completely, body and soul, to God. The rest cannot start until you are there. I will be praying that you find your way to this place.