



R & R BIBLE STUDY 2019-20

breath-taking grace

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

LESSON 3

Sin ... probably one of our least favorite topics. I mean, after all, who wants to look at what we might be doing wrong. I recently read this quote regarding sin, “It’s an uncomfortable, and unpopular subject. But before we can experience God’s forgiveness and enjoy close fellowship with Him, we must first acknowledge our sin and face it head-on.” Studying the book of Romans helps us do just that. In Romans we see sin and its consequences, what’s wrong with judging others, why we fall short of God’s standards, how to be acceptable in God’s eyes, and God’s only cure for guilt and sin, which is Jesus Christ. And this is all covered in the first 5 chapters!

We began in chapter one and although we read it through, today we’ll be concentrating on verses 22-32. I’d suggest reading these verses in the New Living Translation as well to help understand the text. I’m actually glad that we’ll be studying this section the same week we’ll begin chapter two because it’s important to keep these verses in context. Paul has a definite flow of what he’s saying and it’s important that we stay in that “flow” rather than isolating specific verses or topics. I’ll also be quoting a lot from Swindoll and Ash regarding this section because I like how simply they explain things. They seem to word things in a way that’s much more understandable to me. (I’m pretty simple!) And they always explain concepts better than I do! 😊

One last thought. Please be prayed up before you begin your lesson. To be honest, these are some of the hardest truths I’ve ever had to write about. I’ve labored for hours on how to present the truth correctly in a spirit of love and humility. Let’s be frank ... homosexuality is so prevalent in our culture that it’s almost taboo to talk about. Almost everyone knows and loves someone who has adopted that lifestyle and because of that, it has left the believers confused and frustrated on how to stand up for truth without compromising our beliefs, and without judgment and condemnation of them. So, that being said, let’s approach the topic with humility, show each other grace, allow for differences of opinions on the practical side of showing love to others, and always remember, God’s Word has the last say on what’s right or wrong.

First Day

1. Let's begin today by reading Romans 1 again, concentrating on verses 22-32. (Paul's main point of this chapter seems to be verses 23-25. He then goes on to give examples of his point.) How would you outline this section?

2. What do you think these phrases mean:
 - A. Exchanged the truth of God for a lie

 - B. Worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator

There was an "exchange" discussed in verse 23 as well. Paul is about to show examples of an "exchange" between order and disorder. The root of the sins we will be discussing is that they are consequences of the fundamental sin, which is idolatry. Paul's point is that the existence of these sins and desires in society is one of the evidences of God's handing us over to the consequences of idolatry. If we don't love God before everything, all our other "loves" become disordered as well. Keep in mind that his MAIN point in these two chapters is that the moral chaos in this world is the visible evidence here and now of the wrath of God, who has every right to be angry. And that we are ALL without excuse and guilty, and God has provided ONE WAY of rescue, which is Christ and His righteousness. (John 14:6)

3. What are some things that are "out of order" according to this chapter?

Instead of being grateful, man uses the intelligence God gave us to reduce an infinite God to finite images. God created us in His image, but we try to create a god according to our image, our preference.

4. Because of this, how does God deal with this rebellion? (vs. 24, 26, 28)

5. In Rome, the pursuit of “personal passion” was prevalent. What about today? (Give examples.)

6. In our society, we often think of ourselves as the “center of the universe.” Because of that, what types of gods do we invent that project our own selfish plans? (An idol doesn’t have to be a “thing” you put on your mantle, but it can simply be a distortion or an unbiblical concept of God.) Do you struggle with the desire to be the master of your own life?

7. God’s Word MUST shape our perspective of God. Why, then, is knowing His Word so important? How does it shape our views and thoughts? Why is it so dangerous NOT to know His Word?

8. Let me ask you this ... what is shaping your perspective of God lately? (His Word or something else?)

9. There are so many things out of order in our society today. I read this question and it really gripped me. “Look at our heroes, the men and women we admire and talk about. Why do we admire them? Do their lives exemplify God’s order or disorder?”

Paul uses homosexuality as an example of something out of order, violating God's design for sexual intimacy. (Also see Lev. 18:22; 2 Cor. 6:9). He begins verse 26 with "For this reason" which refers back to verse 25 describing idolatry, following gods of their own making. Swindoll wrote, "If we can create a god to our liking, then we can create a life to our liking, free of any moral restraint. Godless thinking, then, turns into godless living."

10. Although Paul uses homosexuality as an example of disordered desire, he proceeds to give other examples of man's depravity and rebellion in verses 29-32, in case we become self-righteous and point fingers like the Pharisees did. List the other "sins" he lists. Ever been guilty of any of these?

It is important to notice the word "practice" in verse 32. Paul's not talking about if you've committed one of those sins, but if you're choosing to "live" in and continually practice them. (Are you practicing any of these?) Paul wants us to realize that we are all alike without excuse, all on the same level, all undeserving of grace. Beware of self-righteousness because Paul will deal with that as well in our next chapter. We are all without excuse, yet we are all offered the lifeboat of grace in Christ Jesus.

11. Last question ... Are any of my "desires" or plans "out of order"? In other words, what do I want that I shouldn't, and what do I NOT want that I should?

We're going to continue this discussion tomorrow. Again, come to the Word with a humble and contrite heart, ready to receive His Word with a spirit of meekness!

Memory Verse of the Week: "For there is no partiality with God." Romans 2:11

Second Day

Work on your memory verse.

1. Read Romans 1:1-32 again. In verse 32, Paul refers to those “practicing” such sins, but also those who “approve” of such sins. Why do you think approving of others’ sins and condoning them can help make it easier to do them ourselves?

2. Let’s be honest. In your life, is there any behavior that you’d like others to condone, understand, or think is “acceptable”? (Rough question ...)

Regarding verses 29-32, Charles Swindoll wrote, “Paul isn’t vague about the things which are not proper. He lists 21 sins that are evidence of a depraved life that grows out of a depraved mind. Scholars have attempted to group these sins into some sort of orderly arrangement. It’s probably best, though, to see the list as a representation of sin’s extent and variety, not a systematic classification. Paul, after all, devised other ‘sin lists’ that contain vices not repeated here in Romans (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Galatians 5:19-21; Colossians 3:5). Paul was well acquainted with the sinful practices of the nations of his day, as well as his own sinfulness. Paul’s purpose, then, is not to list any conceivable sin that humans commit, but to show that those who have rejected God display all manner of sinfulness. Notice the sins range from what we would call small or common sins to heinous crimes. This not only tells us many forms sin takes, but it also reminds us that all sin is sin. Anything that violates God’s standards of perfect obedience puts us in the path of His judgment. It’s not only a sin to murder someone, it’s a sin to fail to love God or our neighbor as God wants us to love (Matthew 22:34-40). Earlier we addressed the topic of homosexuality. It is sin. But what if we fail to extend mercy to a homosexual, or think that we’re inherently more righteous just because we’re heterosexual? Being unmerciful and arrogant are sins too. You see, none of us gets off the hook.”

3. Let’s get personal for a bit. Is someone you know and love living in the sin of homosexuality? Have you had the opportunity to engage them in a discussion about it as well as the forgiveness that’s found in Christ? What are your worries, fears, or hesitations about these discussions?

4. Why do you think the church largely has had difficulty showing the love of God to homosexuals?

5. How do you show love without feeling that you're somehow compromising your beliefs? What are some of the challenges one may face while doing this? What are some of the decisions they might need to make?

6. Is there someone else in your life whose lifestyle bears the mark of being "given over" to his or her sin, other than homosexuality? Have you had the same discussions? Do you have the same trouble loving them?

7. Let's read Romans 2:1-11. What is Paul's main point in this section? To whom does he seem to be speaking? (How does "therefore" tie the chapters and thoughts together?)

While Paul's letter is being read, you can imagine some of the Jewish believers, or those who are self-righteous, applauding Paul's condemnation of behavior in the previous chapter. "You tell 'em Paul," they might have been saying! But Paul is quick to point out the condemnation that comes upon those in the "holier-than-thou" club who like to judge others.

8. According to 2:2, what does God judgment based on? (Does He have different measuring sticks for Jews than He does for Gentiles?)

9. In judging others, how are we judging ourselves? Shouldn't we disapprove of those who sin?

10. We seem to think that pointing out the sins of others makes us "better." Why is that? And why do we fail to see our own faults so often?

Chris Ash points out that it's not the disapproval of evil that is wrong, but thinking that our disapproval puts us in the clear. It's the "I'm not as bad as you" mentality that Paul is aiming at. It's committing sin yourself while at the same time, judging another. (Matthew 7:3-5)

11. How quick are you to judge others? Is it something you struggle with? Has this section challenged you?

Tomorrow we'll pick up Paul's arguments against the self-righteous, and until then, let's ask the Holy Spirit to open our eyes to ways we are quick to judge others. It's definitely a hard one for me. I tend to judge others much too quickly. Lord, help me to see others like You do; help me to disapprove of their sin without puffing myself up!

Third Day

Continue working on your verse. It's a short but important one!

Yesterday we discussed how every time we condemn someone else, we condemn ourselves (2:1-3). Today Paul continues his argument, reminding us that God has a reason that He doesn't always punish us right away for the sins we commit, lest we think it's because we are "better."

1. Read Romans 2:1-11 again, concentrating on verses 2-4. (Again, read verse 4 in the NLT if possible.) Why doesn't God always punish us immediately?

2. Can you think of some examples of sin that may not be punished immediately but might lead us to think we're "off the hook"?

3. Do you ever tell yourself that you must be "alright" or that God doesn't really care about your sin because you don't see any adverse effects? Have you or do you ever rationalize your sin, living in what has been called "cheap grace"?

God's restraint of judgment shouldn't be taken as permission to sin or as His apathy toward wrongdoing. He is giving sinners time to come to Him and receive His forgiveness in Christ, but His patience doesn't last forever. John Stott wrote, "It is intended to give us space in which to repent, not to give us an excuse for sinning." (2 Peter 3:9)

4. God desires a heart that is repentant toward their sin, bottom line. Are you quick to repent or do you live under the fallacy of "cheap grace," believing that God will overlook all your wrong behavior?

5. Now read Romans 2:5-11. What is Paul's main point?

6. Paul had already said that the just shall live by "faith," so what does he mean in verse 6? (Psalm 62:12; Proverbs 24:12) Is he now teaching salvation by good deeds? (Ephesians 2:10)

7. Does God show favoritism in His judgement?

Our works are the public evidence of our faith. A real and true faith is characterized in obedience, Godly living, and good works. Although believers will sin, they are led to repentance and their lives are characterized by good deeds. And God is fair, with no exceptions!

8. So, from verses 1-11, what place does repentance play in our salvation and becoming acceptable to God? Do you have an urgent need for daily repentance?

9. If we continue in our sin and don't repent, what happens, according to verse 5?

10. Jesus hated self-righteousness. Read Matthew 23:1-36 and in your own words, describe His rebuke of the Pharisees.

Let's end with another quote by Swindoll, "Self-righteous condemnation has no place in the spiritual life. We would all be hopelessly lost in our sin if Christ had not saved us. So that's the kind of judgement we're to avoid. Before we engage in any type of evaluation, assessment, or confrontation of others, we need to take a close look at the sins we're struggling with. Then we can move ahead with humility instead of a 'holier-than-I' attitude."

Fourth Day

Work on your memory verse. Take time today to thank God for His "fairness" towards all.

1. Read Romans 2:1-29, concentrating on verses 11-29. Now Paul is specifically addressing the Jews, who held the Law in high regard. According to these verses, were they righteous before God?

2. What privileges and spiritual advantages did the Jews have?

3. Did these privileges guarantee them a place in Heaven? Is *having* the Law the same as living the Law?
4. Which verses in this section show a need for a changed heart? And how is that heart changed, according to verse 29?
5. What is Paul's main point in verses 17-29?
6. How was the "Name of God blasphemed among the Gentiles" because of the Jews? (vs 24)
7. As we live among the world, we have the choice to either bring God glory or blaspheme Him. What are some ways we can dishonor Him?
8. Take some time to bring the various aspects of your life before the Lord. Ask the Spirit to reveal anything that's bringing Him dishonor and causing the world to "judge God" wrongly because of you and your actions.
9. The Jews obviously didn't "practice what they preached." Think of instructions you give to your children, or the standards you hold others to. Do you practice what you preach?

10. The Jews had a lot of Bible knowledge yet didn't live it. Bible knowledge can be good and bad. How can it be both valuable and dangerous?

See you tomorrow, ladies!

Fifth Day

Write your verse out by memory!

In this last section (verses 11-29), Paul had focused on three violations of the Law; stealing, adultery, and idolatry, exposing the hypocrisy of the Jews. He then moves to the topic of circumcision, which was a ceremonial rite the Jews treasured as a sign and guarantee of God's favor. They believed that the Gentiles, those who were uncircumcised, were evil and thus rejected by God. But circumcision was simply an outward sign of an inward conversion. It was a symbol of faith, but faith had to be present for salvation. Now it's circumcision of the heart that brings eternal life. A new heart transformed by the Holy Spirit.

1. According to verse 29, what does a true believer seek?
2. Jews were praising one another for their obedience to the Law. Many desire praises for things they do, ministry success, job promotions, etc. Do you desire praise more from God or man?
3. Let's be careful not judge the Jews too harshly. I found it really interesting that some commentaries pointed out various traditions or practices within our own churches that people can believe "saves" them or makes them righteous. Things like "I raised my hand" one time, communion, doing devotions, spiritual disciplines, etc. Can you think of some others? (Although important, they can't replace faith.)

