***The Gospel is for All Types of Human Beings

Colossians 1:3-8

COL-040***

Please open your Bibles once more to Colossians 1:3-8. Our subject is "Thanksgiving for the Colossians," segment number 18.

The apostle here, in Colossians 1:5, has been speaking of the hope which is laid up in heaven for the believers which they previously heard of in the message of the gospel. Certainly, nothing is more important in all of Scripture than this simple little word: the "gospel." And the gospel is something upon which we should be perfectly clear. We should have very clear understanding. We should know what we're talking about when we refer to the gospel.

Now, it is an important message, and it is quite a proper message that we as Christians deal with, and that we as local churches deal with it. The problem with many local churches is that this is the only subject they deal with. Every service that you will enter will be a variation of the presentation of the gospel. This is a problem of ecclesiology. This is a problem of what the church is supposed to be all about, and what the mission of the local church is. One has only to pass by churches that have signs announcing the sermon for the week which is to come, and you will notice how uniformly the subject matter is the gospel. You know from the text which is put up on the board that the message is going to be on how to get into heaven.

Now, that is an inspiration for Christians, but it does not carry them very far in the knowledge of the Word of God for their personal living. It doesn't carry you through the next week to hear the gospel all over again – a doctrine that you know well and that you believe. But it is important, though it is misused in that respect. Churches are designed to teach people how to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. And that means that you have the right to expect to walk into a church service, and to walk out with a deepened acknowledge of the doctrines of the Word of God.

This time of the year (Christmastime), that message is particularly in our focus. Luke 2:10-11 tells us what Christmas is all about. In Luke 2:10-11, the angels have announced the coming Savior to the shepherds. Verse 10: "And the angels said to them, 'Do not be afraid, for, behold, I bring you good news (gospel) of a great joy which shall be for all the people. For today in the city of David, there has been born for you a Savior who is Christ the Lord.'" The shepherds, on that field that night were given some good news, which would be a source of great joy to all mankind. That day in Bethlehem, they were told, was fulfilled the promise which God made in the Garden of Eden – to send a savior to pay the penalty of death, which was imposed upon the sins of all humanity. This is the good news of the gospel of grace salvation through faith in Jesus Christ as Savior. This is the only way into heaven, and that makes it even more good news. The gospel of grace salvation is what Christmas is all about. And it must be proclaimed by believers to people who possess the Bible, and to those who do not possess the Bible.

Now, we have seen that Paul's approach is very specific, on the firsthand, of those who have no biblical revelation – how he speaks to people who do not have the Bible. That is outlined for us in the Romans 1, and I want to read that passage. We have looked over this. Now let's summarize it by reading the text itself. In Romans 1:18-32, Paul speaks here to people who are unsaved, and who do not have the Bible, and it gives us some guidance on how we should proclaim the message of the gospel to people like that. Romans 1:18-19 "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because that which is known about God is evident within them. For God made it evident to them."

First of all, Paul points out that the revelation about God's righteousness is revealed by human conscience. Conscience recognizes that there are some things that are right and some things that are wrong in personal conduct. Now, conscience in itself will not tell you what is right and what is wrong. Conscience can be seared; conscience can be distorted; and, conscience can go and give you the opposite wrong message. But there is nevertheless a sense in man that there's a difference between right and wrong. Everything is not the same as is so often portrayed in society today.

So, right off the bat, Paul says, "Let's not even talk about the Bible. May I ask you, are you aware that some things are right, and some things are wrong? And most normal human beings will say, "Yes, I believe that that's true." Paul then goes on in verse 20: "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes; that is, His eternal power and divine nature have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." Paul then points out the testimony of the world of nature of an omnipotent Creator Who must have put all this together, and of the nature of man, which is clearly distinctively above all animals, and that nature of man thereby indicates the stamp of the nature of God upon him. It is very clear that animals and people have a great gulf between them.

So, the second thing Paul says is, "Let's not even talk about the Bible. What do you think about the world of nature? Its complexities, and yet its organization? And man, this enormously superior being, that has stamped upon him the very image of God? What do you think about that? What does that tell you?" And an honest person will say, "There's is someone out there who has made this." Every primitive society, with every ridiculous religion, automatically says, "There's someone out there. Somebody has made this. Somebody has put this together. And somehow I'm related to it. And somehow I'm accountable to Whoever it is out there. I don't know how I'm accountable. And I'm bothered by the fact that I know that some things are right, and some things are wrong. And I know that I don't do the things that even I think are right."

So, now Paul has directed them to the focus of their problem. He hadn't given them any answer yet. Then, in verse 21, he shows the consequence of knowing this, and what does man do with his knowledge? Conscience tells me there are rights and wrongs. The world tells me that there is a Creator, but what can he do on his own? Here's what happens. Romans 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." When people walked out of the Garden of Eden, under the condemnation of God, they knew about God. Oh, did they ever know about God? They had an enormous residue of knowledge of doctrine, because, for we don't know how long, every evening, in the cool of the day, Jesus Christ would come into the Garden of Eden, and He would conduct Bible class. It was a daily operation. And Adam and Eve were instructed in the principles of doctrine (that they had no other way of knowing). And they learned about God; they learned about the world; they learned about righteousness; they learned about justice; and, they learned about all of the things that pertain to the nature of God, and to the conduct which was befitting them as those who had been made in His image.

So, they had great knowledge. But that was very quickly dissipated, and it went downhill, because people without the Bible ignored creation, and they ignored what their own conscience was telling them. So, it ended up in such a terrible situation that all the earth was filled with nothing but violence, and destruction, and evil, such that God wiped it out in the flood.

Well, with the flood began again a great knowledge of God. On that arc there were Bible classes nightly. And Noah did the instructing. And the Word of God, when they walked off that ark, was in full capacity and full bloom in their understanding. But what did they do with it? They didn't appreciate it. They didn't honor it. And this is a principle of the Word of God. If you will not respect, and if you will not honor a good thing, God will remove it from you. When we ask you to come and attend a program at Berean Christian Academy (that is a super presentation), and you thumb your nose at it, and you say, I have better things to do than that, then the time may come when you won't have a Berean Christian academy and you won't have to come to it. And God will say, "Since you didn't appreciate it, We'll jerk it away from you." Many children will be suffering, and will be at a disadvantage. They may be your children, or they may your grandchildren. And you will demonstrate that what you don't appreciate, you will lose.

These people were so sophisticated that they didn't thank God for such a simple thing like the Word of God. If you don't appreciate a context of a congregation that's instructed in doctrine; that you're not conned; you're not played for fools; and, you're not treated as if you did not have an intellect – but you stay home. You don't want to leave the Cowboys game when they're about to have a great victory. So, you don't show up for evening the service. After all, once a Sunday is plenty good for anybody to go to church. It was only those crazy Christians in the early church who met every night for church.

Well, it's like going on a Berean Youth Club ski trip. You have to go to church every night there. Every night they have a service. I mean, if they just had it once! The guy even reads a Scripture before you go on the slopes in the morning. You get Bible stuffed down your throat the whole day. When they gather up at the lodge to eat their lunch, somebody prays. You just can't get any relief.

If you don't appreciate access to the Word of God, just know that out there in the wings may be the judgment of God that's going to remove it from you, and you won't have it anymore. And then maybe you'll look back and say, "Whatever possessed me not to have supported a really good thing. Even if I wasn't all that crazy about it or felt I needed it, I ought to go out to the women's society, because it is a good thing to have." And for some people, it is a very important thing to have. My weight is thrown with the good things that God has given us.

The human race always has this stupidity of never appreciating what God has given, and never honoring Him for the good thing that He has provided. And what did they go into? They were so sophisticated that they went into their futile speculations. And what happened? "Their foolish (meaning their disoriented, out-of-temporal-fellowship hearts) were darkened." Pretty soon there was no gospel around. Pretty soon there was nobody giving the Word of God. Pretty soon there was no doctrinal instruction. And where did society go then? Then they were in real trouble, because the lighthouses were gradually being extinguished of believers who knew the truth.

**The Ignorant Intellectual**

So, then in comes the ignorant intellectuals in Romans 1:22-23: "Professing to be wise, they became fools, 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." Since they wouldn't listen to the truth about God, that they had been instructed in, they made their own knowledge about God. What did they make? They made animals (the creation), and they call it the creator. They looked upon themselves as a creation of God, and they said that they were the creator – they were gods. And they degenerated into the most corruptible kind of practices, because pretty soon the word "fertility" came into the picture. The sun was the great god of fertility. The sun made everything grow. The sun made everything reproduce. How best to worship your god than through sexual fertility? So, sex came in as an act of worship. And in came temple prostitution and the whole degrading system – and crawling creatures.

Here was the great sophisticated Egyptian culture. One man told me one time that, as he looked at a display in a museum of the religious life of the Egyptians, it hit him that God has his different ways of approaching people. And people have their own ways of approaching God – that God, in gracious kindness and love, accepts. And he said there he saw in this display how these people of Egypt came to God with their animal gods, and their greatest god of all was the dung beetle. That was their great god, because every day, the little black beetle would go to the horsey manure pile. And he would take his little claws, and he would form a little round ball. And then he would push that ball across the ground. And he'd roll the ball, and roll the ball. And everybody would say, "Oh look there. There is god right before our eyes. Here's our god in his form. He'd just been to the manure pile, and made his little ball in representation of the sun, our god up there. And as the sun rolls across the sky, our little beetle is rolling his symbol of our god across the ground here. Isn't that wonderful? Oh, how wonderful to have a dung beetle for your god."

Well, most of what people have for their gods is dung. That's the polite word. That's it: no more, and no less. Why? Because of their foolish speculations – the ignorant intellectuals. This is the kind of thing you hear on nightly news. This is the kind of thing you hear from political leaders all the time. And if you are not in the know from outside sources, you would be so conned by their deceptions. You would be so carried away by their deceits. You would be carried away by their vain speculations.

You have to know the truth. And the truth has to begin with the gospel from wince you can build, through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, a great reservoir of doctrinal understanding. Then you'll be in command of yourself. Then you will be able to use your life. And you will never come into heaven and regret what you did with it.

So they're down to crawling creatures. Romans 1:24: "Therefore, God gave them over to the lusts of their hearts – to impurity, that their bodies might be dishonored among them." After you go from rejecting the truth of God, then you go into idolatry. And when you go into idolatry, then you go into sexual perversion. It's a progression all the time. You start it at the first; you reject the Word of God; then you will go into substitute worship objects (idolatry); and, then you'll go into the greatest kind of abominable moral perversions.

They dishonor God among themselves. Romans 1:25: "For they exchange the truth of God for a lie, and they worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason (their choice), God gave them over to degrading passions." Now, there is a terrible doctrinal principle that should chill you to the heart. You may listen to a caution from the Word of God, from whatever source you get it – this pulpit or wherever. And you may say, "I don't like it; I don't like your interpretation; I don't think that's what that means; and, I'm going to do it my way." Do you realize God's going to give you over to your stupidity. You go ahead and push back. You go ahead and refuse to play your role as a woman; your role as a man; or, your role as a child, that God has ordained for you in Scripture. And God will say, "Okay, go ahead and do it." And He'll open the door wide. And you'll do every fool thing, and you'll be so cocky, and so happy, and so smug, not realizing the enormous cost that this will have for you an eternity as a Christian. God will give you over to your determined willful disobedience.

To these people, in Romans 1:26-27, "He gave them over to what they wanted – their degrading passions. For their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural. 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 a due penalty of their error." And that penalty is death.

**Homosexuality and Lesbianism**

Here, we have, at the very opening of the book of Romans, the gradual description of where mankind has come, when it progresses from knowing the Word of God; holding it in contempt; being indifferent toward its directions; and, violating its principles, and gradually it becomes dimmed. Then you create your own focus of worship and of living, and you go into idolatry, and from then there is no ground of restraint, because there are no rules. And you descend into the most abominable acts. And, here we have come to, right up front, one of the all-time great abominations of lesbianism and homosexuality.

When you show this to a homosexual or a lesbian, even to their ministers, they will say, "Well, you're misinterpreting those Scriptures." Now, as I told our parents the other night at the program, when God spoke to Moses, He spoke to him in plain, ordinary, everyday Hebrew. And the result was that when he wrote down what God had said to him, everybody understood the commandments of God, and they understood what God meant. And when God spoke in the New Testament to Paul, He spoke to him in plain, ordinary, everyday Greek. And when Paul wrote it down, everyone understood the commandments of God, and they understood what God meant. And when God speaks to us today in our splendid, superb translations of the Bible, He speaks to us in everyday ordinary English. And that translation of the Hebrew and Greek enables us to understand clearly the commandments of God, and what He means. And these people took that clear knowledge that they had of God, and they twisted it from what it meant, and from what it said.

Anybody can read this passage. It's plain, ordinary English. And you understand exactly what it is saying. What does the homosexual preacher say? He says to his flock, "Don't let that bother you. This doesn't mean what it sounds like it means. What this is saying is that, for a homosexual, it is unnatural to be a heterosexual. And for a heterosexual, it is unnatural to be a homosexual. Therefore, you must be what you are. And what this Bible verse is telling you," the preacher says, "is that you should be a homosexual if that's what you are. And you should be a heterosexual if that's what you are.

Suddenly, the words are not plain, ordinary, everyday, simple-to-understand English. They mean nothing. But this is what people do with the Scriptures. This is what politicians do all the time, because politicians, by nature, are deceivers. They are con men. And the farther that politician is from a knowledge of the Word of God, and a devotion to it as the inherent voice of God, the more untrustworthy he is.

What this passage tells you is what elsewhere God calls an abomination as a result of knowing God; knowing scripture; turning your back upon it; and, putting your focus on things that God has made instead of on the Creator himself. And this is a terrible act. And the penalty for it is death.

Do I need to remind you of what is raging through the homosexual / lesbian community in the form of the penalty of death of AIDS? Ted Koppel had a fit when somebody said that on a program one time: "I can't believe that you would say that this is a judgment of God." Well you can bet your bippy that it is. That is exactly what the Word of God has said. It has upon it the penalty, and that penalty is death. It's not happy. It's a very sad death. It's greatly destructive. But don't you forget for one moment, dear friend, that when you take the same path with the Word of God, you too experience a spiritual death as a Christian – of separation from God's blessing. You experience positional spiritual death so that you are separated – you are out of temporal fellowship, and your life is useless. And boy, are you going to go gung-ho living that life, thinking you are just right there at the top, being blessed by God? You're not being blessed by God. What you are doing is creating your own world, and God has shut the door of His guidance, and you're carrying on, on your own.

These people did this very thing. And when this error is pointed out to homosexuals, what do they do today? They become hardened; they become antagonistic; and, they become more determined to do their evil.

Romans 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." There's that principle again. God will open the door and say, "Go to it."

Romans 1:28-31, "Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice. They are gossips, slanders, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, unworthy, unloving, unmerciful." Holy mackerel (to use a biblical phrase)! That even sounds like some Christians. "Is it possible that a Christian can act like a natural man? That's exactly what Paul says happens. Then he is called "a carnal man." "Carnal" comes from the word for "the sin nature."

Romans 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 hardy approval to those who practice them." They degenerate to the point where they say, "Yes, I'm going to experience death for what I'm doing, but I'm having a great time now. I'm burning the candle at both ends, but as Edna St. Vincent Millay once said, 'It makes such a wonderful light (burning the candle at both ends), and when it's snuffed out, it's all over. But then I'll be in hell with all my friends, so it won't be too bad.'"

**The Immoral Man**

Paul points out that negative volition to the testimony of nature and conscience resulted in human viewpoint speculations which resulted in immorality, and then into idolatry. The rejection of natural revelation about God resulted in total moral degradation and every loathsome practice imaginable. The rejector of natural revelation, in defiance of God, practices moral vileness, knowing that God declares the penalty of death for such sins. But he doesn't care. The rejector of natural revelation about God encourages others, furthermore, to join him on the road into the valley of death. The rebel against natural revelation is flippant about its message. So, he never receives the gospel message needed for salvation.

That's what Paul is pointing out. You do not have revelation from God. You're a person without the Bible. You're under the penalty of death. You're doomed. You're headed for the lake of fire. And if you do not respond to the truth that you have from nature and from conscience, and you recognize that there is something you need to know, you will never get the gospel. That's called going positive to God-consciousness. I don't care where you're born. Once you come to the age where you're accountable for right and wrong in the eyes of God, then you also have the capacity to respond to conscience and nature. And if you do not go positive to that information, you will never get the message of the gospel. Yes, you can never go to heaven without the gospel. You can never go to heaven without hearing the message of truth.

**The Zodiac**

Once that message of truth, before mankind lost it, it was written up in the skies in the zodiac. And we've studied that in great detail, and seen what a marvelous declaration of message was up there. And when mankind passed this along, word-by-word, even apart from being written down, they could describe what each of those signs of the zodiac was telling about the great Creator out there. And one had only to look up into heaven, and there was the message. You couldn't look up into heaven and get it. But if somebody told you the story of truth that had come down from the time of the flood, behind all those things, and even before that, to the time of Abraham, you looked up, and you knew what the message was saying.

Satan said, "We have to stop that." So, he took the zodiac, and he changed it into astrology, and he perverted the whole message, so that the original message was lost. But these people, because they have not accepted what message they do get from God, apart from the Bible, God consciousness was rejected, and they'll never hear the gospel. No missionary will ever come to them. There'll be no access to the truth.

**The Moralist**

Now Paul says, "There's another kind of human being." These people have been terrible, as per the description here – very loathsome human beings. Nobody in his right mind wants to descend to such degradation. But Paul said that there is a bigger problem in the person who does not do these evil things. He does not have the Bible, but he does respond to the sense of right and wrong. And within the context of his culture, he is faithful to what that culture says: "This is the right thing to do. This is the wrong thing to do." He's the moralist.

Now, the moralist is a little bigger problem. He still has no revelation from God, and he's counting on his morality. So, Paul says, "Let's talk to that kind of person who doesn't have the Bible: the one who is not a low-life type – a high-life type of unbeliever. Paul picks this up in Romans 2:1-8: "Therefore, you are without excuse: every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself, for you who judge practice the same things." He's talking about people with certain moral standards. They are in a habit of condemning those who do not follow the moral standard that they approve of: "And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. And do you suppose this, O man? When you pass judgment upon those who practice such things, and you do the same yourself, that you'll escape the judgment of God? Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, Who will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who, by perseverance and doing good, seek for glory and honor and immorality eternal life." Those who live that kind of lifestyle signal that they are born again people: "But to those who are selfishly ambitious, and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness – wrath and indignation to them."

So, the apostle now turns to these people. He deals with a person without the Bible who is a moralist. He even accepts the rules that are found in the Bible. The moral unbeliever admits what his conscience says ought to be. He has a mental ascent that you ought to do right. And that soothes his conscience. He agrees you ought to do right. The problem is that his agreement of what ought to be is not, in thought and deed, what is practiced by himself. He indeed violates the very rules that he believes you should keep. He doesn't even live up to his own moral standard, because the sin nature trips him up, and he even breaks the rules of the culture that he's in that agrees that this is right, and this is wrong. And the result is that he cannot quiet his conscience. He has a sense of guilt in his mind.

So, he is in a personal agony. He cannot live up to what he himself believes. And conscience can only be satisfied by living in the truth of divine viewpoint. The unbeliever cannot do that. He has no Holy Spirit to teach him, and he has no Holy Spirit power to do what is right.

So, the moralist is also immoral in some area, so he's guilty. This was the problem of the apostle Paul. He said, "All my life, from my youth, I've kept all the commandments." Then he said, "I was reviewing all the commandments (number one, number two, number three, ...), and being pleased with how I didn't do any of those things." He said, "Now I'm rolling along in high gear, and, dog-gone-it, I get to the last one and it says, 'Thou shalt not covet.' Now, the others were easy for me because they're all external sins: stealing; adultery; and, worshiping other gods – all of those were outward. But all of a sudden," he said, "one day I realized that here was something that I couldn't do outside. I could only do it up here in the head. And, suddenly," he said, "I was crushed to realize that I was shot through with mental attitude sins. I was a terrific good guy on the outside. I was a total moralist. But here on the inside I was covetous. And when I saw that, I also saw that there were other sins of the mind that were as degraded as those externals that I was so proud of not doing.

Romans 2:9-11: "There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil: of the Jew first; and, also of the Greek. But glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good: to the Jew first; and, also to the Greek. For there's no partiality with God."

Romans 2:12, "For all who have sinned without the Law (without having the Law) will also perish without the Law. All who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law." So, the apostle Paul says to the moralist, "You will be held accountable for your own standard. You have said that this is your standard, and therefore, you should be accepted by God, but you break your own standard."

Then he goes on in Romans 2:12-16, and at this point, he brings in the Bible. Now he has a person who accepts that there are rights and wrongs. Now he shows them that you haven't kept your own standard. Now he brings in the Bible and says, "I want to show you why you can't keep your own standard. You're on the right track. There are rights and wrongs. But before you think that you're going to make it with God by your good conduct, I must tell you that the lake of fire will be filled with moral people, as Hades this moment is filled with millions of moral people who lived up to the standards of their society, but they did not have the power of the gospel – the regenerating power of salvation that enabled them to do what is right.

In Romans 2:12-15, he says, "Those who live under the standard of the Law are going to be judged by that. Those who have sinned without the Law are going to be judged apart from that:" "For not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. Yet how can I do the Law? For when gentiles, who do not have the Law, do instinctively the things of the Law, these not having the Law unto themselves." Paul says that even Gentiles (pagan societies) rise to biblical standards. And that's true. Rome, at the peak of its power, was very biblical in its moral standards; in its justice; in its governmental integrity; and, in everything that you could ask for. They didn't get it from the Bible. They got it from conscience, and they got it from other sources, and maybe from some influence of the Jews. But when they, as Gentiles, did what was right, then God prospered them. It doesn't matter who you are – if you do right, you'll be blessed.

Verse 15: "In that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts (these gentiles), their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternating between accusing or defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus."

Paul brings in the Bible here now, in his witnessing technique. He has dealt with the unsaved moralist from his own frame of reference in his own culture. He shows the unsaved moralist that he does not live up to the standard for right and wrong in his own frame of reference, and let alone the moral standard of the Bible.

So, once the problem of inconsistency of the moralist is established, then Paul brings in the biblical solution: grace salvation through Jesus Christ. Following your conscience does not lead to salvation. The morally guilty are still there in some respect, and bad conscience can lead you astray. So, only trust in Jesus Christ can bring forgiveness for moral guilt, and calm and settle your conscience. How can you do that? You have to know the gospel.

So, at this point the apostle Paul says, "Now, let me tell you what you need. Your sense of doing what is right – that's commendable. What you need now isn't is an absolute righteousness. And you can only get that as a gift from God. And in He comes with the gospel of the grace of God. Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and to you will be imputed the absolute righteousness of God, and all of your sins will be forgiven, and you'll be forever in the family of God. Now the person is ready, if he will go positive to that gospel message, to accept the full revelation of the Word of God.

**The Religious Man**

Paul says, "There's one other kind of person we have to deal with if we're going to be witnessing. And that is the person who is not only moral, but he's devoted to religion. Oh boy, he's got a religion. He was probably born into it. And he is a person, here in the context of who Paul dealt with: the Jews – they have a Bible. And he is now dealing with people who are living at a time when the New Testament is being put together, so that have more Bibles. But here's the person who has the Bible.

Paul takes up the religious believer who has the information of Scripture. Paul says, in Romans 2:17-21, "But if you bear the name of Jew, and rely upon the Law, and boast in God, and know His will, and approve the things that are essential; being instructed out of the Law, and are confident that you yourself are a guide to the blind (a light to those who are in darkness); a corrector of the foolish; a teacher of the immature; and, having in the Law the embodiment of the knowledge and of the truth, you therefore, who teach another, do you teach yourself? You who preach that one should not steal, do you steal?"

Romans 2:22-29, "You who say that you should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, are you willing to even rob from the temple, so you get what was given as offering to idols (that contaminated stuff)? You who boast in the Law, through your breaking of the Law, do you dishonor God? For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you; just as it is written: 'For indeed circumcision is of value if you practice the Law. But if you are a transgressor of the Law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. If, therefore, the uncircumcised man (the gentiles) keep the requirements of the Law, will not his uncircumcision be regarded as circumcision" And will not the one who is physically uncircumcised, if he keeps the Law, will he not judge you who, though having the letter of the Law, and circumcised, are a transgressor of the Law. For he is not a Jew who is one outwardly, neither is circumcision, that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew who is one inwardly, and circumcision is that which is of the heart – by the Spirit; not by the letter. And his praise is not from men, but from God."

This believer is a religious person, but he has the same conflict. He has the Scripture, and he has information of what he ought to be as well as the information from creation and conscience. And Paul deals with this type of religion people on the basis of the violation of his Bible himself – his own loyalty to his Bible knowledge, and he violates. And this is what the Jews were doing. They had the knowledge of the Bible, and they were violating it. Why? Because they were unsaved. Here you've got the condition of a person with the Bible, and with knowledge of the Bible, and yet they're nothing but heathen. Then he presents the same gospel to them as the gospel of the grace of God. And in Romans 3:9, he makes a declaration against all unbelievers whether they have the Bible or not.

Please notice Romans 3:9. Here he makes the declaration. They have the revelation of God, but they're still unbelievers. "What then? Are we better than they? These people, the Gentiles? Not at all. "For we have already charged that both Jews and Greeks are under sin." And Paul is pointing out that these people, whether they're Jews or Gentiles, they have the information, and they're all under the condemnation because they have not believed the gospel of Jesus Christ. That is the great tragedy.

Then, in these verses which follow, he has 14 statements all drawn from the Old Testament that declare how absolutely guilty people are without the gospel of grace salvation, no matter how much of the Bible they know. Notice in verse 6: "All humanity is under the guilt of God." Everybody is equally condemned.

Then, in Romans 3:10-12, He shows that everybody has an evil character. And in Romans 3:13-17, he describes the evil conduct that everybody is guilty of. And in Romans 3:18, he sums it up: "There is no fear of God before their eyes." And this is the cause of the root problem, even in society today. People have no respect for God.

I think all of the problems in American society today can be attributed to this issue of fear of respect. On the one hand, like the judge that the woman was pleading with in the Old Testament, who neither feared God nor man, our society does not fear God. They have a disrespect for the Bible. We are in a post-Christian era. We have rejected the very foundations that have created this nation – upon the principles upon which it has been built. That's why the kids in the public school cannot sing Christmas carols. They cannot be referring to anything that has to do with Christmas its actual reality and meaning. We have no fear of God in American society.

As a result of that – the other side of the coin (that occurred to me recently) is that we have no fear of man, because we do not respect the Constitution of the United States. . . We have no respect for the Constitution – that preservation of liberty. We have all this talk going on about things that government should do, and the tyrannical nature of man is not feared. The Constitution was that brilliant God-devised document to preserve us from the tyranny of man – to preserve us in perfect absolute freedom and liberty as the grace of God has given us freedom in Christ. And when we do not fear what man can do with us, and we ought to be in deadly fear of everybody who is in political power and in political authority, and when we see that they violate the constitution.

We have great debates going on in Congress. Of only 30% of all the money that is raised and spent by the United States, only 30% (one-third) is all that goes to fulfill the specifications of the responsibilities of the federal government enunciated in the Constitution. Two-thirds of the money which is spent in this country are on things that the government has no authority in the Constitution to do. Now that's because we have a people who do not fear men. If they feared men the way our founding fathers did, they would never let them get away with that, and the courts would shut this off, and this country would have a new breath of freedom, prosperity, peace, liberty, and respect in the eyes of mankind.

This passage here in Romans 3:18 shows that immorality is not the basic problem. The unbeliever has something that is bigger with God. His immorality is but a reflection of his problem. The problem of the unbeliever is his mental departure from divine viewpoint into a human viewpoint. He doesn't deny the existence of God. He just has no respect for God's thinking in the Bible. This departure from the truth of divine viewpoint: from creation; from conscience; and, from the Bible, is rebellion against God. And that's the root of all human problems today.

So no amount of self-effort, and no amount of self-improvement is going to solve the conflict of the soul of the man who has and knows the Bible, but who has no salvation. He is dealing with merely the bad fruit, but not the root of his problem. Unbelievers need the gospel to solve their inward alienation from God. Then the evil fruit will stop because you've killed the root. The unbeliever's basic problem is not what he does, but what he is. He is a rebel against God. And he is a rebel, therefore, against God's word. Therefore, he is a rebel against God's authority.

So, when the apostle Paul comes and has to deal with the religious person (the guy who has a religion, and who thinks he has a source of authority for his religion, he points out to him just how evil he is, and how helpless he is in his evil.

A Christian will not be perfect. A Christian will not be sinless. But a Christian will control that. A Christian will correct that. A Christian will not lean back and be pleased to have no fear of God and no fear of man. He will function under that which is characteristic of a child in the royal family of God. And he will do that because of the misery of his conscience as a child of God, and the discipline that God will bring upon him gradually until he changes and responds. But if there's anything we ought to learn today, it's that if you insist, as one who has the Bible, and who has instruction in it, to refuse to subject yourself to it (such that you may say, "I'll do it sometime," or "Well maybe that's not what it means"), the God's going to open the door for you to go headlong to your own destruction. That's the worst judgment that God brings upon those who know the truth, and who give the back of their hand to it. It would be wise to think twice before you do that.

As Jesus once said to a group of ignorant intellectual Pharisees, "If you had had the sense not to come here and listen to Me, and to be instructed in the truth, the guilt and punishment that you're going to have out in eternity would not have been so great. But now, because you have learned from Me what is the mind of God, through the authority that I as the Son of God bear, you are going to be held so accountable for what you have heard, that you will regret it for all eternity." That is a very interesting observation. If you don't want to do what is right, then don't attend these services. And some people don't. And for that very reason: they don't like what they hear. And they give bad descriptions. They describe it in various insulting ways and degrading ways in order to soothe their conscience. I know exactly what they're doing. But the truth divides. And Jesus said, "Don't think for one moment that I came to bring peace. I came to bring division between those who fear God and man, and those who don't. And those who are subject to the authority of God – those are the people who are going to make it out of this life into an eternity that will be brilliant with blessing and reward beyond their fondest dreams. While down the street, they're going to have all those people who are living in Baltic and Mediterranean. Why not be up there on Boardwalk and Park Place? That's the place to be. Dear God, we thank you for the Word of God. We have these kinds of people to speak to as your witnesses today.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1995

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