***The Final Verdict, No. 2
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Please open your Bibles once more to Romans 3:19-20, which we have entitled "The Final Verdict."

We have seen that from Romans 1:18, all the way through Romans 3:20, Paul has been showing that every human being needs to receive an absolute righteousness from outside of himself – that he cannot produce this particular righteousness from within himself. It must come from outside. It must come as something that God provides.

Paul's strategy, we have seen, in witnessing to unbelievers in his day, was guided by their orientation to Scripture. He did not therefore begin with gentiles who did not have the Scriptures by quoting the Bible to them. He began with the kind of proof that they had from creation; from the image of God within them; and, from their conscience.

**Ungodliness and Unrighteousness**

With the Jew who did have the Bible, Paul could begin with quoting Scripture. What he is trying to do is to clarify the problems that face both Jews and gentiles relative to God, and that is that both are under divine wrath. This was summed up in the Romans 1:18 in these two words: ungodliness, which has to do with the fact that men are in pious in their attitude toward God because they have an evil nature; and, unrighteousness, which has to do with the fact that people perform evil deeds: sins; and, human good.

The order is very important. Unrighteousness comes from godliness. If these two things are the problem of the human race (of unbelievers), and Paul says that they are, then it would seem that this is what we should resolve. This is exactly what Paul is going to be dealing with. Ungodliness produces unrighteousness. Now shall we deal with: with unrighteousness; or, with ungodliness? What needs to be resolved in a human beings? When we deal with unbelievers, what is it that we need to press upon them as their problem? Should we go to an unbeliever and say, "Now, look. You're acting in a bad way? You shouldn't cuss, and swear, and cheat, and be adulterous, and hate people, and be a business man that exploits people. That's unrighteous. Now let's get that straightened up."

All of these things are active unrighteousness. And suppose that we were to do all that. Would that solve ungodliness? Would that solve that man, by nature, is born in sin and condemned in the sight of God, with the fact that he wears better clothes; has a better education; enjoys more recreation; has a better job; and, lives in a better house? Is that going to solve the problem of ungodliness? Not for a moment. That's self-evident. Yet, all you have to do is look around you in our society today, and where is the concentration put? It's right here on unrighteousness. It is not here on trying to solve ungodliness. It is not to try to get man's evil nature straightened out, so that then his evil practices will naturally have an opportunity to be corrected.

You can't reverse these. But human viewpoint does exactly that. Because people are by nature ungodly, they are in practice unrighteous. Human viewpoint reverses all this and says that the problem is to solve unrighteousness, and get people to do right. So, they try to devise ways to reconcile man to man rather than, as Paul is going to show us, the problem is to reconcile man to God. Then that man can be reconciled to man. So, the result is social programs galore to try to resolve these human tensions.

Many churches fall into the same fallacy. They envision that their mission for God is to produce these kinds of social action programs in order to resolve the conflict of man to man. Unrighteousness is simply regarded as something wrong in man's thinking. Man has a bad viewpoint. So, if you correct his mental attitude, the idea is that then he will do what is right.

However, the Bible says that unrighteousness is the result not of a mental attitude, but of something deep within the soul of the human being, and that is a nature of sin – that man is under genuine, real, moral guilt. Man doesn't just have a psychological aberration. He has a destructive, deep-seated guilt within his soul because he's born in sin. And that is the problem.

So, resolving a person's thinking is not going to resolve the issues that create these conflicts between people and within our society.

In Mark 12:28-31, you have the story of the young lawyer who asked the Lord: what is the greatest commandments. And Jesus, you will notice, told him, "First of all, the greatest commandment is to love God: with all your heart; with all your mind; and, with all your soul." Then He said, "The second commandment is to love your neighbor." This is a very important order again. First, you learn to love God by resolving ungodliness within your soul. Then you can learn to love your neighbor with righteous actions rather than unrighteous actions toward people.

So, human viewpoint is what we are faced with when we are acting as witnesses to the unbelieving world. They try to treat the symptoms of evil instead of the cause.

Why is this the case with people today? Well, the reason for this is that, along with man's natural ungodliness, there resides within everyone an antagonistic attitude toward retribution. The principle of retribution for wrongdoing is rejected. Within the book of Romans, a twofold problem is dealt with.

**God's Wrath is against Evil**

First of all, Paul has established that the wrath of God is against all ungodliness, and its expression of unrighteousness that is characteristic of people. The wrath of God is against this.

**Everyone is Evil**

Secondly, the book of Romans establishes the fact that everyone is under this condition of ungodliness and unrighteousness in practice: that sin is universal; and, that people are universally condemned. Therefore, everyone is universally under the wrath of God.

**Retribution**

The wrath of God is against evil; and, everyone is evil. That's the combination that this book, in short, is presenting. What that means is that God's wrath, being against sin, is going to be expressed in retribution. God is going to punish ungodliness. God is going to punish its expression of unrighteousness. That's retribution. This is totally rejected by modern 20th century man. The wrath of God demonstrates that everybody needs to be saved. But man does not like the picture of a God who punishes evil conduct. He abhors the picture of a deity who functions on absolute justice and absolute righteousness. The idea of retribution for wrongdoing is resisted in American society. Consequently, Americans, more and more, have abandoned law.

What's the result? The result is: rising crime; lawlessness in the home; lawlessness in schools so that the teachers are even in fear; lawlessness in business so that businessmen have to move prices up to cover the thievery; the lack of safety on the streets; moral degeneracy; debased manhood; and, debased womanhood. These are all the consequences directly of the attitude in our post-Christian era of American society, where the Bible is no longer an effective authority. This is a direct consequence of our rejection of all that authority and of the principle of retribution for wrongdoing.

Yet people bemoan the consequences. They bemoan all these evils, but they don't associate it with the fact that it is because increasingly we don't think that sin should be punished. We don't think God should punish it. We don't like to think of a God like that, and we don't like to have our judges do it in the courts of law.

**Capital Punishment**

One of the prime examples of this (the concept of the rejection of retribution) is in the matter of capital punishment. Capital punishment is rejected as proper retribution for murder-one. It is simply a case history example of this resistance to the principle of retribution.

**Deterrence**

If you were to talk to someone who's against capital punishment, and ask them, "Well, give me your reasons," the reasons would generally be three basic reasons. One: it does not deter. That's the biggest and the favorite one – that capital punishment does not deter murder. At least, it doesn't deter it any more than life imprisonment. However, several scholarly studies which have been recently completed have shown that capital punishment is a definite deterrent. From the mid-1930s, like about 1935, through 1955, the number of murders in the United States actually was decreasing. In 1935, there were about 10,587 murders. … That dropped to 7,418 murders in 1955. So, we have a span of years from 1935 to 1955 when the rate of murders was decreasing in this country.

Another thing that was taking place at the same time was that states not only had the law of capital punishment, but they were executing it. Many times, the people who argue that capital punishment on the books does not deter murder are playing a debater's trick on you which you want to be aware of. They are talking about a period of it not deterring murder when states were not *applying* the penalty. So, when you talk about capital punishment as a deterrent, and as God's retribution that He declares in Scripture for murder-one, always be aware of the fact that you must discuss this when this law is on the books *and* when states are executing it. Don't let some gobbledygook-brain, anti-capital punishment character lead you up that blind alley that he is debating with you – deterrence when the states aren't applying it. Of course, when states aren't applying it, the fact that it's on the books makes no difference that it's a law. If the states aren't applying capital punishment, then it is no longer a deterrent.

During this same period, it was regularly applied, and the deterrent effect was obviously there on these statistics.

Now, from the end of the 1950s, the anti-capital punishment campaign began building up speed, and steadily executions in this country were year-by-year reduced. So, by 1968, executions in this country were zero. God says that if you take a person's life willfully (murder), then you will pay for it with your life. That is retribution. That is the concept upon which a just and a holy God functions. That is abhorrent to the natural man. Here in capital punishment, the attitude of the human viewpoint of natural man was increasingly becoming evident. So, by 1968 we're down to zero on executions.

While the anti-capital punishment people were saying that our society has become ennobled, and we have discouraged people getting into the habit of violence because the state is not performing violence, it would be interesting to see what happened to the statistics on murders during that time. Well, here are the statistics. In 1968, when there were zero executions, there were 12,500 murders. By 1972, there were 18,520 murders in the United States. By 1975, there were 20,510 murders in the United States. So, in the period of 20 years, homicide had increased 200%. And the figures today, as of 1977, are even greater. So, when the deterrent effect of capital punishment applied as just retribution for taking a person's life was not being applied, murders in the United States mounted precipitously. So, much for the deterrent argument.

Professor Isaac Ehrlich at the University of Chicago conducted studies on the deterrent effect of capital punishment. His scholarly report stated that, for every execution of a person who had been convicted of murder-one, it saved eight lives. It either saved lives by keeping him from performing further murders, or it acted as a deterrent upon others who would have murdered if it had not been for the threat of capital punishment. You can read pages of his interviews with people who are guilty of grave felonies: robberies; rapes; and, attacks of one kind or another. And they did not carry weapons. They were asked, "Why didn't you carry a gun when you're doing this kind of a robbery? If you had carried a gun, you have gotten away with it." Again and again and again, the answer was, "Yes, that's true. But I'd rather take my situation now than run the chance of losing my head, and killing somebody, and facing execution." It was very clear, by the testimony of people who were careful to keep themselves from even taking a life when they were performing a felony, that capital punishment has a deterrent effect. Life imprisonment does not.

In the People's Republic of Massachusetts, the average life penalty runs for two-and-a-half years. If you get a life imprisonment penalty in the People's Republic of Massachusetts, you will find that you've have two-and-a-half years, and then you're out. And many times the people who have been released, after serving their two-and-a-half years of life in prison, have gone out and murdered again. Massachusetts isn't the only one. There are plenty of states that have this kind of a communist anti-God attitude toward what the Word of God has established as divine viewpoint principles.

**Discriminatory**

The second argument that you'll get is that capital punishment is discriminatory. What they mean is that it falls with special severity on the poor and the blacks. Well, it is true that today, as of right now, on death row, 45% of the convicted murderers are black. But it is also true that 47% of all murder victims are also black. And there's the correlation. As a matter of fact, it has now come to the point that if you are black, and between 18 and 35 years of age, the number one cause of death for you will be murder. It is blacks who have been murdering blacks. That is the connection between the two. It is not that it falls in some unfair way upon them. A large number of convicted blacks, therefore, means that there have been a large number also of blacks who have been murdered.

Now, there is the fact that a person may lack economic advantage to get a good lawyer. That's part of this discriminatory argument – that if you're white, middle-class, or rich, your capacity economically to get defense will ensure that you don't suffer the consequences of your actions. You'll not face retribution. But that's beside the argument. Maybe steps need to be taken to provide adequate defense counsel, but that has nothing to do with turning your back upon God's law of retribution. That's insane. That in itself destroys society. That does not help anything. That does not help anyone, Make it possible, if the poor and the black are the ones who don't have the defense, to get the defense. The government very readily makes other things possible. This would be an easily enough accomplished solution.

**Cruel and Unusual Punishment**

The third argument against retribution in the form of capital punishment is that it is cruel and unusual punishment. The argument for this is that the Eighth Amendment of the Constitution prohibits cruel and unusual punishment. However, the Constitution, as the Supreme Court has clearly established, is not opposed to the death penalty, because the Fifth Amendment deals with paying for crime with one's life. There are certain stipulations as to how a person's life may be taken in this country for a crime. The Fifth Amendment spells that out. So, obviously the writers of the Constitution would not have recognized capital punishment in Amendment 5, and then suddenly have prohibited the thing in Amendment 8. So, the opponents of capital punishment can't really argue too much on this – that the Constitution denies cruel and unusual punishment; and, therefore, the Constitution is against capital punishment. They clearly see that the Constitution has made provision for capital punishment.

So, what they say is that civic decency has now evolved to the point where we oppose retribution – where we oppose such an idea of vengeance. Now we have come full circle in this argument to the very thing that the apostle Paul is faced with in the book of Romans in trying to talk to a world which has a human viewpoint outlook that retribution is offensive to them. So, they are offended by a God who acts with vengeance toward sin – toward that which violates His essence. But God cannot do anything else but hate sin, and no human rationalization is going to hold back the wrath that He has declared that He will exercise against sin.

The reason man needs absolute righteousness is just this very point. It is that God hates sin. It's not just that sin is bad, but it's the fact that God hates sin. Now, if God hates sin, and all of us are under sin, then you are going to suffer the wrath of God unless some other provision is made so that you can escape that wrath. The retribution is going to come. No matter how much our society says, "I hate it; I don't like it; and, I don't want retribution," God says, "It's going to come." If He did not do it, His own holiness would be violated.

**Moses**

We don't have to look very far in the Bible to be assured that this is exactly what God is going to do, because God had some men that were His favorites. A man like Moses was a big favorite with God. Well, Moses sinned. He struck the rock a second time instead of speaking to it. Thereby, he violated the typical picture of Christ dying for sins once and for all. In God's sight, that was a grievous sin. And a favorite like Moses was punished by never being permitted to enter the Promised Land that he looked forward to for so long, and that he had suffered for so much in leading that people to the very threshold of.

**David**

Take a favorite (a man after God's own heart) like David. There is no doubt that when David violated the moral code of adultery, God's judgment came down upon him with full retribution. So, it is very clear that those of whom God is particularly fond cannot escape the retribution principle.

The purpose of the gospel then that Paul is going to describe here in the book of Romans is to put people in a legally right relationship with a holy God. That is what we call the doctrine of justification – that God as judge legally declares that we now are free of moral guilt; that we are free of the penalty of moral guilt; that we are free of all consequences; and, that we stand in His sight as justified because He imputes to our account the absolute righteousness of Jesus Christ. And that is the story that we have to tell unbelievers: "You are under God's vengeance. You are guilty of ungodliness because you are born with an old sin nature. You have expressed that ungodliness in unrighteousness. Therefore, the wrath of God is upon you, and the retribution of God, of condemning you to an eternity in the lake of fire, is going to certainly fall upon you. Your only escape is to secure the absolute righteousness that God demands for everybody who lives in His heaven. And the only way you can get it is through His provision, which is through faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior.

**Justification**

For this reason, the apostle Paul took great delight in the biblical doctrine of justification and in the biblical doctrine of the gospel. Paul was very proud of it. He was not ashamed of it. He delighted in telling people this doctrine because this was the way of escape. This is what people needed to hear. This was their only hope.

We have not invented the doctrine of justification. We found it in the Bible. This is not a human philosophy. Human reason is so distorted that it botches everything up relative to God. Anytime you sit down and try to reason logically about what you think God should be like, and what God thinks, and what He should do, you're going to be wrong, because your mind has been warped by the fall into sin. And all systems of human religions and all philosophies that the human mind can invent all fail to get its adherents into heaven. Only the gospel will do it. This is the answer to man's condemnation.

So, Paul was very, very happy to tell people about the gospel. And that's exactly what we've been called to do, and that's what our attitude should be.

**The Nature of Mankind**

When you do deal with a human being (an unsaved person), your problem is, first of all, to understand the nature of mankind.

**Made in the Image of God**

The nature of mankind, first of all, is the fact that he has been made in the image of God. The image of God means, first of all, that we have a mind. It means also that we have emotions. It means also that we have a will. It also means that we have a conscience. These qualities of mentality, emotions, and will constitute what we call personality. You are a person because of those factors.

**Personhood**

There is stamped upon each of us this personhood. Whether you are a believer or a nonbeliever, you stand in the image of God. You cannot escape it. You cannot pretend it's not so. It is there. Your personality is there, and your sense of right and wrong (your conscience) is there.

The presence of this image of God in the unbeliever demands certain things of a person. Because you have a mind you, by nature, demand content of truth for thinking – the basis for making decisions (information). Because you have a mind, you, in the nature of the case, demand information that has to be satisfied. You may receive true your information or false information.

Secondly, because you have emotions, you have the need to love and to be loved, and to be loved with an absolute value; that is, that you are a person of significance. You have an absolute value placed upon you – that kind of love. And that means a lot, then, which is true and faithful. Deep within the human breast, there yearns this kind of an emotional attachment – to love and to be loved in faithfulness.

Thirdly, the quality of will (the volition) craves freedom to choose so as to make things happen. Within every human being there is the desire to be able to make choices that make things happen – not choices that don't make anything happen. Within the human heart is this frustration such as Solzhenitsyn has so capably explained for us – that within the heart of the Russian, there yearns this capacity to be able to do things; to make things happen; and, to be free to choose.

That's because God put within us the yearning to be free to choose and to be able to make things happen – real choices. Conscience (that within us) requires a code of standards to work from. And you can't deny that you have a conscience. Some people try, and sooner or later, they will trip themselves up by making a moral judgment. Sooner or later, they will say, "Oh, I'm not going to do that. That wouldn't be right." Or they might say, "You shouldn't do that. That isn't right." Or they might say, "Go ahead and do that. That would be a right thing to do." What have you done? You've made a moral judgment, and revealed that there is within you the desire for some kind of a standard by which to gauge what is right and what is wrong.

The apostle Paul witnessed to people on the basis of the image of God within them. He faced up to the fact that man has a mind. The unbeliever's mentality, needs absolute truth, and he gets that truth (God has said) from creation, and from his own conscience, apart from the Bible. The written Bible adds the full knowledge about God and man's condition under divine wrath. This doctrine of absolute truth is provided for man's thinking. Outside of Christianity, there is no absolute truth relative to eternal things. None of the religions of the world, and none of the philosophies of the world, have anything at all to say about absolute truth. They cannot provide that content for man's thinking.

That's what was so wonderful about the Protestant Reformation, because it went back to the Bible, and the Bible immediately provided a content for man's thinking relative to God and eternity, and the standards of right and wrong.

So, Paul says, "First of all, where are you going to find out about God? Where is your mind going to get the information that it needs to make these decisions?" And the unbeliever says, "Hmm, where am I? I read the philosophers. What do they know? I read the great men of history. How do they know they're right? I've reasoned things to myself from what I hear other people say, but I don't know that they're right. I don't know that I have any truth." Paul says, "That's right. You don't."

Secondly, he says, "How about your emotions? You have a desire for personal acceptance, and only God and Christianity can satisfy that. You need to be of absolute value to someone, and you are to God. He proved that by sending His Son to die for you on the cross. That's what makes a human being worth something. Only in Christianity is a person dealt with individually as to his personal worth. In anything that Satan produces, it's all collectivists. It's a group worth – not an individual worth. And any man who is treated as just a cog in a machine yet yearns to be individually dealt with – to have some personal values. Christianity alone makes it possible to avoid being enslaved by your emotions, and to have your emotions responding in an absolute way.

**Christianity**

Then in volition, the apostle Paul says, "Faith has to be exercised in absolute truth that will change your destiny." Faith is an act of submission where the rebel bows to what he knows is true about God. Volition in Christianity is never asked to make a leap into the dark. We do not ask unbelievers to believe something in the form of the gospel which they are not sure is true. That's an idea that we have picked up in fundamentalist circles – a leap into the dark, or a leap of faith, and it is wrong, wrong, wrong. God never asks you to believe the gospel if you think it's not true. The fact of the matter is you will not. And we must not present the gospel as some kind of a hope. We have to present it as indeed that which it is – the truth of God, and the truth as bound up in the person of Jesus Christ. Only Christianity gives us the capacity to have a volition that can function on the truth (that can make a choice) that's going to have eternal consequences. Your choice relative to the gospel, that has been presented as truth to your mind, to which the will can react, will determine your destiny. No other system of religion gives this option of a real choice. All non-Christian religions and systems are delusions.

**Conscience**

Then Paul says, "You've got a conscience." And here is the rub. Our conscience tells us that we have a moral guilt. The unbeliever says, "No, it's not really a moral guilt. It's just that I think I'm guilty. I just have a guilt complex. I have a guilt feeling, but I'm not really guilty." Yet, the conscience within him screams, "You're guilty. Oh, you're guilty. You have real moral guilt," and it eats away at him. All human viewpoint systems try to dismiss this fact of real guilt as an illusion of the mind.

**The Gospel**

Here again, what is the gospel do? It provides the ground for removing this guilt. So, only in the gospel of Christianity can the conscience find peace with itself. Christianity provides the moral absolutes through Jesus Christ – the absolute moral righteousness that the holiness of God demands. Only the gospel can resolve the tension which is between man's evil and God's absolute demands of righteousness. Absolute righteousness which the sinner’s conscience craves has to come from outside of himself. He cannot produce it himself.

So, in this way, by dealing with the image of God: the mind; the emotions; the volition; and, the conscience, we can deal with people, and show them that all of these things within them are crying out for something that their system (their logic – whatever they have) is not fulfilling.

The truth is in Christianity. The image of God in man reveals the truth about God. What's the problem? We're saying that man has truth. The problem is that he suppresses it. Human viewpoint solutions are shown to be false because they force man to live in violation of the image of God, and he's under tension what he does so, so that must not be the answer. Only Christianity will enable man to resolve the image of God within him.

So, Christianity is *the* truth, and all other philosophies and all other religions are *the* error. The failure to understand Christianity as absolute truth will merely give you a hope rather than the fact that it'll give you a trust. We're not just hoping for the best after death. We know that the best is going to be for us.

This attitude of just thinking that Christianity *hopefully* will be the best will cause you not to be a very good witness. It'll make you afraid to talk. It's the only answer that man's sense of the image of God and of his conscience that will satisfy those elements in him. The unbeliever, in order to live consistently with his human viewpoint, has to deny this image of God, and has to try to squash his conscience.

**Witness**

So, here's what we are called upon to do. You and I, at the end of the twentieth century, who understand the principles upon which God has made us. and who understand the problems facing modern man, have been told by the apostle Peter in 1 Peter 3:15: "But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asks you for a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear." You are to be prepared to give an answer for the hope that you have of eternal life – the trust that you have in Christ, and what it has produced.

This is the Greek word "apologia." That's the way it looks in Greek. It is not an apology expressing your regret over something, but it is a defense. It's a verbal defense. This is a legal Greek term. The "apologia" is a verbal defense. Here it means that you are to be prepared verbally to defend Christianity. The point is to know the thinking of the unbeliever; to know the problem he has with the image of God; to know the problem he has with his conscience; and, to know the problem he has against retribution for evil doings, and then to approach him on that way. Don't go barging into him quoting Scripture verses. But first of all, take him where he is, on where he stands, and what his mind is coming up with as his defense when someday he will face God.

People come to salvation with questions in their minds that they have a right to have answered. The purpose of these final answers that we give them is to prepare them for trusting in Christ as Savior: to turn from their humanism; and, to turn to the Savior. And Paul prayed for opportunities to give answers to people.

In Ephesians 6:19-20, a lot of Christians cannot speak boldly because they don't know the first thing of the problems that an unsaved person has that we have to speak to. So, you and I are going to have to search the Scriptures to find the answers to the unbelievers' questions, as 2 Timothy 2:15 and Ephesians 1:17-19 instruct us to do.

Modern man is in despair over knowing anything. He doesn't think that he can know anything with a certainty about the issues of life; about God; or, about what's right and wrong. And this is the battle of the angelic conflict that we're engaged in. This is the spiritual battle that is at the heart of our dealing with modern man.

You remember that the battle of Jericho, that you read of in Joshua 5:13 through Joshua 6:5, was a battle that was clearly won by God. It was one of those examples where the battle is the Lord's. Well, this is how we battle in the angelic conflict relative to seeking to bring the unbeliever to Christ. We battle with him knowing that the battle is the Lord's.

However, you also remember in Joshua 7 and 8, the story about the battle of Ai. Following the great victory of Jericho, they had a terrific defeat. And the battle at Ai was the result of seeking to enter warfare with sin. The consequence was that they were defeated. So, if you're going to be a soldier of Jesus Christ under the Lord's leadership in the spiritual conflict of the angelic warfare, you're going to have to be in temporal fellowship.

So, first of all, when we witness to people, we are storming the temple of darkness which Satan dominates. We are storming a mentality that he has darkened with human viewpoint. We are storming, first of all, under the understanding that the battle is the Lord's. He's going to do the fighting and the winning.

Secondly, we are storing it under the understanding that we must be in temporal fellowship, or we're going to get our ears beaten off.

Thirdly, in Joshua 10:1-14, we have this tremendous story of the victory over the Amorites by an exhausted Jewish army. God gave them the capacity. He even made the earth pause in its rotation to extend the day so that the Amorites could not escape into the hills; regroup; and, counterattack. And once the Israelite soldiers were on their trail, they were able to pursue them with ample daylight to see what they were doing.

So, this victory over the Amorites by an exhausted army again reminds us of another principle in this witnessing to modern man – that the Lord is going to overcome our weaknesses and our fatigue.

So, the human condition is that everyone who is an unbeliever possesses real truth. He secures this truth from creation around him. He secures it from his conscience. He secures it from the crying of the image of God within him. And he finally secures it also from the Bible – from what God has said. And yet, they hold down this truth. They squelch it and they suppress it, in spite of the fact that they have it. And the consequence of this is that the wrath of God will be exercised against them.

Could God really say that people are without excuse? You remember that that's what he has said here in Romans 1:20: "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." If people did not have real truth, they could not stand at the great white throne and have their mouths closed as Paul has said they will (standing there in complete silence), because they would have excuse. But every generation (every individual) that's ever lived has had real truth. He has had truth concerning his moral condition. He has had truth concerning the Creator God being out there. He's had this evidence, and the problem was that he squelched it. He rejected it. If God had not revealed Himself, He could not hold us guilty.

So, the unbeliever's suppression of the truth of the knowledge of God has resulted in the corruption of the truth. That's why he has this human viewpoint attitude when you speak to him. He has extreme distortions of the truth. His thinking is wrong about the human problems. The natural man has a distorted view of reality, yet God is going to hold him responsible for having distorted the truth that he had.

All of this has been solved by Christ coming to die on the cross. The act on Calvary was a historical event. It happened in time and space, and it was God's answer to man's need of absolute righteousness. He illuminates the mind of the believer. He enables him to believe in the love of God as expressed in Romans 5:8. Then gradually, once a person is born-again, his human viewpoint is changed to divine viewpoint.

Here's the problem. Let's tie this up. You and I are going to speak to various types of people. Let's look at three types briefly in the Bible. Here's what you are going to face when you act as an ambassador of Jesus Christ.

**The Unbeliever who Accepts the Authority of the Bible**

In Acts 8:26-39, you have the story of Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch. Here you have a man that you will rarely find in American society today. Among American unbelievers, you will rarely find this man. This eunuch knows the Scripture. He accepts the authority of the Bible. He has no mental block to God's love. Few Americans are in this category today. They are not reared in biblical influences. Philip goes directly to giving this man the historical facts about Jesus Christ; the work on the cross in time and space; and, God's words about it from the Scriptures. Philip gave the gospel information. He tells a man what he must do with it (to believe this truth). And the response was immediate.

**The Unbeliever who is Negative to God**

In Luke 15:11-32, you have the story of the prodigal son. This is a second type of person that you will meet in your witnessing. The prodigal son will not receive his father's love for him. He does not care that God loves him. He is negative to the words of God. He is negative to the words of his father. The son here rebels with his human viewpoint view of reality. The father tries to tell him, "This is the way it is." But the son says, "No, here's how it is." So, the rebel son comes up with a viewpoint against his father's point of view.

What happens to this person? He had to go to the pigpen. It was finally when he sat in the pigpen that his mental block against the father's love and against the father's words were broken. Experience with the real world of the pigpen brought the son to divine viewpoint reality. He saw the impotency of his humanism. For this type of person, it sometimes takes time to change from human viewpoint distortions. He has to have a few breakups in his life of one kind. He has to have to foul-ups of relationships of one kind. He has to have some economic disasters; some social disasters; some marital disasters; or, some ambition disasters. Finally, when he gets muddied enough in the pigpen, this son stops and will say, "Wait a minute. I'm not getting anywhere. Something must be wrong with my thinking." The sad part is that many Christians follow the same pigpen route before they wake up.

**The Unbeliever who is Religious**

The third type is in Matthew 19:16-30. The rich young ruler was completely wrapped up in his human viewpoint humanism. He was the hardest of all, because he was religious. He was completely unresponsive to the answers that Jesus Christ gave him. This person believes he can be saved by his good works – his legal righteousness. So, Jesus Christ pushed him to admit that he could not do all these things that were good. The rich young ruler said, "I can do whatever is good." Jesus said, "Well, what is the Law?" The rich young ruler said, "I've kept all those good things. I can do good things." Jesus said, "Wonderful! Sell everything you have, and give to the poor. That's a marvelous good work, and God will approve your performing that divine good."

The rich young ruler crumbled right there before the Lord's eyes, because he could not do that good. Here he was saying, "I can do every good. I can do every good work. I've always done it." But here was a good work he could not do, so Jesus just collapsed him. The rich young ruler, however, insisting that he has met God's standard, is the hardest of all to reach, because, though he was pressed right to the fact that he was inconsistent in his claims, we read that he sadly turned away and walked away from Jesus Christ. We don't know whether he ever came back.

There will be many people like that. When you have shown them: that the image of God is violated in them; that they violate their conscience; that all of their answers are false; that they do not fit the reality of what they are, and how they live, and who they are; that Christianity does come up with the answers; that Christianity does give the solutions; and, that Christianity does provide the absolute righteousness, many times they will turn and sadly shake their heads and say, "I can't give up my sloppy pigpen. I can't give up my superior philosophy." They turn off, and they leave. The rich young ruler's distorted view of sin, and his own merits before God, have completely blocked out the truth in his mind. He goes away into the lake of fire. So, you'll get these basic three types.

Dr. John E. Danish, 1975

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