"THE DELUSION OF SELF-RIGHTEOUSNESS"

Romans 2:1-5

10-27-2019

INTRODUCTION: Paul already showed the so-called "atheist" or "agnostic" that he was without excuse (1:18-23 *v. 20) for his disbelief. Now he turns the tables on those who would say "Amen" to the people described in 1:18-32, by showing the self-made "moral" man to be without excuse (2:1).

***Don't be deluded (deceived) by self-righteousness!**

Avoid being deceived by remembering the 3 misconceptions (mistaken ideas) of a self-righteous person:

Misconception #1 -

I. I CAN SEE SIN IN OTHERS,
therefore, I must be right with God (v. 1-2)
(The self-righteous clearly sees, and yet is blind)

Misconception #2 -

II. I KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT,
therefore, I must be right with God (v. 3)
(The self-righteous knows right, but does wrong)

Misconception #3 -

III. I AM EXPERIENCING GOD'S GOODNESS,
therefore, I must be right with God (v. 4-5)
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HRM - 1-21-2023

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NOTE: In verses 1-5, the words you, your, or yourself appear 11 times (5 "thous" in v. 1 alone!).

***Don't be deluded (deceived) by self-righteousness!**

The self-righteous man is:
1) foolish (v. 1-2);
2) illogical (v. 3) and
3) ignorant ("not knowing" - v. 4) in his thinking.

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V. 1

"Inexcusable" = without legal defense

The hardest people to lead to Christ are "moral" self-righteous people. (people who are hard-working, disciplined, faithful to family and spouse, honest in business dealings, etc.).

Why are they so hard to reach with the Gospel?

1) They fail to see that they have broken God's law.

   a) No one has kept the greatest command (love God and neighbor totally - Dt. 6:5; Mt. 12:30).

   b) Everyone has broken at least one law, which makes everyone guilty of breaking every law (Ja. 2:10)

2) Therefore, they fail to see their need for Christ.

SEE Matthew 7:1-5.

Not all judging is wrong -

--We are to judge (in the sense of discerning right from wrong - I Cor. 2:15 - "But he that is spiritual judgeth all things, yet he himself is judged of no man.")

--We are to let God's Word do the judging (Ja. 4:11, 12), not set ourselves up as the standard.

--We are to judge righteously (Jn. 7:24).

The judging that is wrong is -

1. Unjust, fault-finding; hairsplitting legalism; cutting criticism; unloving condemnation.

2. Hypocritical judging (v. 3-5).

"Condemnest" = to make a judgment against.

Your own words and actions will one day condemn you (ILLUS: the expression "He hung himself").

Jesus said, "...By thy words thou shalt be condemned." (Mt. 12:37).

Every sin that has ever been committed, you are capable of committing!

--Anyone who would deny this does not understand how depraved he really is (cp. Rom 3:1ff).

We are just as depraved as the next guy. It's only by the restraining grace of God that we are what we are! (I Cor. 15:10).

--Anyone who would deny this is not comparing himself with a holy God! (EX: Isaiah 6; II Cor. 10:12 - "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise."

You may not exercise the magnitude of lewdness described in chap. 1, but you have broken God's law nonetheless!

You may not have broken the letter of the law, but have broken the spirit of it.

Externally, you may appear to men to be white-washed, yet internally, if you were honest and humble, you must admit that there are skeletons hanging in your closet (Mt. 23:27)

Mt. 23:28 - "Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity."

There are sneaky sinners and blundering, obvious sinners who are constantly being found out. Some have the skill and ability to hid sin; others do not.

Some are more professional or "white collar" sinners, but law-breakers nonetheless. At the Judgment there will be no privileged characters (Rom. 2:2).

A wicked thought is just as sinful as a wicked act.

Mt. 5:21-22 - Anger = Murder
Mt. 5:27-28 - Lust = Adultery
(Lust - a desire to have that which is not yours)

If you have looked at pornography or fantasized through a "romance" novel even once, you are an adulterer!

A. Why is it so easy to judge others rather than self?

1. It removes the attention away from yourself. The spotlight is turned off of you.

   Remember that whenever you point your finger at others you have three pointing back at yourself.

   EX: David saw sin in others, but not in his own life, until Nathan very pointedly applied his sermon (II Sam. 12:1-13 *v. 7)

B. Why are we blind to our own sin?

1. Our heart is a deceiver -

Jer. 17:9 - "The heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; who can know it?"

Gal. 6:3 - "For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself."

2. Sin is a deceiver -

Heb. 3:12, 13 - "Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin."

"There is a generation that are pure in their own eyes, and yet is not washed from their filthiness" (Prov. 30:12; CP. Is. 5:21).

Prov. 16:2 - "All the ways of a man are clean in his own eyes; but the Lord weigheth the spirits."

"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes; but the Lord pondereth the hearts" (Prov. 21:2; cp. also Prov. 12:15; 14:12).

The Bible says, "If we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged" (I Cor. 12:31).

--You judge others for going to an R-rated movie, yet you sit at home watching HBO.

--You who see the foul language in others, do you see the gossip in your own tongue?

--You who see pride in others, do you see your own selfishness?

--You who can point out unfaithfulness in someone else's life, do you see your own failures?

--You who can readily spot someone who has a "chip on his shoulder," do you ever see the abominable grudges you hold?

The Pharisees could see everyone else's sin but not their own (SEE John 9:40, 41).

v. 2

God's judgment will be according to truth. There will be no bogus defense attorneys in Heaven; no unjust judge; no buying off God.

He knows you are guilty (whether you admit it or not) and one day your works will reveal the real you (Rev. 20:12, 13).

Misconception #2 -

II. I KNOW WHAT IS RIGHT,
therefore, I must be right with God (v. 3)

(The self-righteous knows right, but does wrong)

"Thinkest" - - an accounting term meaning "to mentally calculate or reckon"; "to add up" what you view as justifiable facts that will prove your innocence at Judgment day.

"Escape" - to run out from.

A man's ability to "judge" implies a knowledge of right and wrong.

You may know the Ten Commandments, the "Golden Rule," all theology, Bibliology, Christology, Pneumatology, Anthropology, Soteriology, Harmartiology, Ecclesiology, and Eschatology.

But simply knowing truth, means nothing if it does not affect your will.

Knowing and doing are two different things.

Probably nothing is more sickening to God than someone who knows what is right, but does not obey it (Ja. 4:17).

"To him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin" (Ja. 4:17)

Jesus did not say "If you love Me, you will know my commands" - but "You will keep them" (Jn. 14:15, 21).

The saying is true: Practice what you preach

Why will the one who judges others <u>not escape</u> strict judgment himself?

ANSWER: He knew better! He knew the Law.

A judge in the court of law is someone who <u>knows the law</u>. When a judge violates the law (after he knew it well enough to be able to sentence others to prison for breaking it), he deserves a stricter trial and sentence.

Knowing what is right and not obeying it has more severe consequences than not knowing (SEE: Lk. 12:47-48).

(Degrees of punishment in Hell for sinning against Light - cp. Lk. 20:47; II Pet. 2:21, 21).

Misconception #3 -

III. <u>I AM EXPERIENCING GOD'S GOODNESS</u>, therefore, I must be right with God (v. 4-5)

(The self-righteous experiences God's <u>goodness</u>, yet is under God's <u>wrath</u>)

"Despisest" = lit. to think down upon; to belittle; or treat lightly.

People belittle God's goodness by thinking "We deserve it."

The reason God's goodness is <u>so good</u> is because we don't deserve it.

Israel's possession of the good promised land was not because of her righteousness (Dt. 9:4-6).

ILLUS: Tom Stockwell (my former boss in Minnesota) was deceived into thinking that because his business was going well (the money was flowing in, etc.) that he must be living a life that was pleasing to God.

God is not necessarily showing His pleasure (approval) toward you because you: 1) win lotto; 2) get a promotion; or 3) win the election.

God is <u>not</u> necessarily saying: "I am pleased with mankind" just because the weather is beautiful, our harvest brings forth abundantly, or our economy is flourishing.

God is not necessarily smiling on you when good things happen in your life, any more than God was frowning on Job's life when he was engulfed in trials and misery.

God makes "the sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt. 5:45).

God's goodness (kindness), forbearance (tolerance; holding back wrath), and long-suffering (patience) is not a reward to man, but should serve as a reminder that it won't last forever!

God does not want anyone to perish; He is longsuffering that all would come to repentance. (II Pet. 3:9).

"Repentance" = to have a change of mind. God's goodness to sinful man should cause undeserving man to fall on his knees and see a God of grace! A God who is able to give eternal life, to man, who cannot earn it and does not deserve it.

V. 5

However, the self-righteous one rather than softening up hardens up. Rather than having a change of heart, he has an impenitent (unrepentant) heart, and thereby he treasures up (stores up, or gradually accumulates) for himself more and more and more of the deep-seated anger of God, who one day will say, "Enough. Your change to repent is over. Now you will receive the wages of your sin!"

Many say in their heart with the wicked man described in Ps. 10:6 - "I shall not be moved, for I shall never be in adversity."

The Psalmist (Asaph) is amazed (perplexed) at the prosperity of the wicked, who are deluded by a false sense of security (Ps. 73).

They prosper (v. 3); are physically strong even at death (v. 4); "not in trouble as other men; neither are they plagued like other men" (v. 5); "...they have more than heart could wish" (v. 7); "they increase in riches" (v. 12); . . . But all this goodness does not last forever for the ungodly

(Ps. 73:15-16 - "If I say, I will speak thus; behold, I should offend against the generation of thy children. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me.")

CONCLUSION:

Note the paradox of self righteousness:

The self-righteous person -

a. clearly sees, yet is blind (v. 1-2)

b. knows what is right, but does what is wrong (v. 3)

c. experiences God's goodness, yet is under God's wrath (v. 4-5).

What is the cure for self-righteousness?

1. Have a humble viewpoint of yourself (an accurate self-image).

   "Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall" (I Cor. 10:12).

   A self-righteous person is one who has no mercy (compassion) on others. He is generally harsh; displaying a "holier-than-thou" attitude.

   However, when you see yourself (in the true light; as you really are) you have a different attitude toward others.

   It does not mean that you don't seek to correct an erring brother (indeed you must!) but you do it with a spirit of meekness (Gal. 6:1-3 - "Brethren, if a man be overtaken in a fault, ye which are spiritual, restore such an one in the spirit of meekness; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted. Bear ye one another's burdens and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man think himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.").

2. Have an exalted viewpoint of God (a Biblical view of God)

   "He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord" (II Cor. 10:17; cp. Jer. 9:23-24).

3. Submit yourself to the righteousness that God gives

(Rom. 10:3 - "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted themselves unto the righteousness of God.").

The Pharisees questioned Jesus for eating in the same house with publicans and sinners (Mt. 9:10-11), to which Jesus replied, "They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick . . ." (v. 12) (cp. Lk. 7:36-50).

What did Jesus say to those who trusted in themselves and looked down on others? (SEE Luke 18:9-14 - Pharisee & Publican).

Jesus says to the self-righteous today as He did to the Pharisees: "Ye are they which justify yourselves before men; but <u>God knoweth your hearts</u> . . ." (Lk. 16:15).