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Living Hope EFC

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"I may be a sinner, but I'm not as bad as..." Rom.1: 28 - 2:16

Unrighteousness & self-righteousness: all sin is fatal!

INTRO *Don't talk so plainly about sin!*

Some years ago a Methodist pastor in Australia preached a message on "sin." That next week one of the church officers came to his study to talk to him. "Pastor, ***we don't want you to talk so plainly as you do about sin.*** We think it will be harmful to our boys & girls. Call it *a mistake* or something else, but not *sin.*"

The pastor went to a closed and brought back a small bottle of strychnine that was clearly marked "*Rat Poison.*" He said to the man: "So what you want me to do is to change the label. Suppose I take off this "poison" label, and put on something milder – like 'Essence of Peppermint.' Do you see what might happen? ***The milder the label, the more dangerous the poison.***" - Green, 340

In the first three chapters of Romans, Paul talks a lot about *SIN!*

- No one can accuse Paul of disguising *SIN* with other *milder labels!*
- He is like a **doctor** examining a sick patient. His conclusion is that all men have *sinned* and are under the God's wrath. ***SIN IS FATAL!***
- Chapter 1: He examines & addresses man in his "***ungodliness,***" sin in **overt forms.** Sin that would make anyone blush and feel shame.
- Chapter 2: He addresses man in his "***self-righteousness,***" **covert sin.** *Respectable sin.* The *moral* person listening to Paul pronounce judgment upon the *heathen* in chapter one, and who says "Amen!"
- But no matter whether it is blue collar sin or white collar sin, overt or covert, people without the Bible or with the Bible = All ***sin is fatal!***

For Paul to call sin something milder is to make it even more dangerous!

- ***Man's situation (1:18) is not the result of a mistake, but of rebellion.***
- The sadness & brokenness in the world is the result of real guilt.
- This understanding is at the basis of one's sociology & psychology.

1:28-32. The human potential of sin – in those who reject God!
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Here is a look at the open-endedness of sin's corruption in any man rejecting God. Humanity – removed from the grace of God.

CONTEXT: **1:21,25,26, 28.**

Man exchanged the TRUTH of God for a lie, and is now living out a LIE.

- *Man has lost the truth about God's existence, the universe, & himself!*
- He does not know who he is anymore & lives in denial of reality v27.

ILLUS: Like the **eaglet** raised by turkeys in the barnyard.

1 – V.28, Paul uses a word play to make his point.

²⁸Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. “

Man “**disapproved**” knowledge about God. God gives man over to a “**disapproved**” mind (mental capacity). The result = “what is improper.”

Dokimazo: means to test something for its approval, value, worthiness.

- A “depraved (reprobate) mind is the direct result of man’s rejection of God. A mind that no longer has proper discernment. –Prov.1:7.

2 – This is the 3rd time for this expression: “God gave them over.”

(1) V.24 – To sinful desires of **their heart** & sexual impurity.

(2) V.26 - To shameful lusts. (3) To a disqualified, useless mind V.28

- He can’t think straight! In every area of life his judgment is faulty: his view of marriage, child raising, value of human life, church, justice.
- **Americans** say: “What is happening to our kids? Our country?”
- Answer: We have put our Bibles on the shelves & live without truth.

3- We have a biblical description for: “total depravity of man”

Definition: Man fails the test of pleasing God because sin has affected every aspect of his being; his heart, mind, affections & his will.

- **Rom. 8:7-8**, 7,18; Eph.2:3,

Romans 8:6-8 “⁶The mind of sinful man is death, but the mind controlled by the Spirit is life and peace; ⁷the sinful mind is hostile to God. It **does not submit** to God's law, **nor can it** do so.

⁸Those controlled by the sinful nature **cannot please God**.”

Romans 5:12 “Therefore, just as sin entered the world through one man, and death through sin, and in this way death came to all men, **because all sinned**.”

Ephesians 2:3 “All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature **objects of wrath**.”

- Rom.5:12 – Adam’s original sin produced a **moral corruption** of the nature in every successive generation.
- Ps.51:5, Rom.3:23–**No man has anything that commends him to God**
- **IT DOESN'T MEAN**: Every man will be as evil as is his potential.
- OR that no one can do that which appears good to other men. BUT that every facet of man’s nature is corrupt & unacceptable to God.

The Penalty: Spiritual death –**Eph.2:1-3. “Dead in trespasses and sins”**

- Rev.20:11-15.

The Remedy: NEW LIFE from God! **Rom. 8:1-4.**

Romans 8:1 “Therefore, there is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit of life set me free from the law of sin and death. For what the Law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the

likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in *sinful man* in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the *sinful nature* but according to *the Spirit*.”

- ***This new life brings man back into the TRUTH.*** He understands who he is, who his neighbor is, and how to live with a renewed mind.

4- **V.29-32. Rebellion against God erupts in evil against man.**

- Notice that the list of actions is a list of personal ***attacks against other people***. **Hatred for God results in hating our fellow man.**
- Conversely, loving God results in love for man: 1 John 5:1-2.
- We cannot give what we do not have. Matt.15:19-20. Gal.5:22-23.

APPLY: The voice of our age says, “I can do whatever I want. It’s my life. I’m not hurting anyone else.” - ***But this is not TRUTH!***

- **Q:** Which of the sins listed – DO NOT hurt someone else? Which can be kept *private* without affecting our *public* world?

ILLUS. Simpson Trial, *Deliver from Evil*, 111-115

- Man “disapproved” knowledge about God. God gives man over to a “disapproved” mind. The result = “He does what is unfitting.”
- **He thinks he can live a double life – without consequences.**
- Our private behavior always affects someone else. **Rebellion against God expresses itself in behavior against our fellow man.**

2:1-16. Those who judge the ungodly are equally as guilty of sin.

Is that possible? Yes, you heard right!

2:1-4 You who judge the outright sinner, you are just as guilty!

- Paul now moves from theological apologetics to personal application. From talking about the “heathen,” to talking to the *reader*, to those who point the finger judging others, but are blind to their own sin.

Vs.1-3. You do the same things that you are condemning others for!

- Which of the sins in chapter 1 – haven’t you committed?
- We who have the Bible, churchgoers, lawyers, good moralists, who volunteer for good causes, who help the homeless, etc. ***We have a way of looking at ourselves as much more righteous than sinners.***

Luke 18:9-14. Parable of the (moralist) Pharisee & Tax Collector.18:21-23

Have you noticed?

When: the other fellow acts that way, he is ugly; when you do, it’s nerves

...Others are set in their ways, they’re obstinate; when you are it’s firmness of principle.

...Your neighbor doesn’t like your friend, he’s prejudiced; when you don’t, you’re a good judge of character.

...He treats someone especially well, he's flattering; when you do you are being thoughtful.

...He takes the time to do something well, he's a slowpoke or lazy; when you do, you are deliberate and careful.

...He spends a lot, he is materialistic; when you do, you're generous.

...Someone points out flaws in things, he's critical; when you do, you're creative or discerning.

When he is mild-mannered, he is weak; when you are you're gracious.

When someone dresses especially well, he's extravagant; when you do it's tastefulness.

When he says what he thinks, he's spiteful; when you do, you're honest.

Paul addresses the person who says: *"I am not perfect, but I'm not as bad as that person. And God surely wouldn't condemn me."*

Or, *"I've never read your Bible and I'm better than a lot of Christians."*

Paul says: "Yes, God will condemn you because you're using the wrong measure. **God, not man, is the measure!** Gal.3:10; Rom.3:20

- Everyman, even the man without the Bible, has a build-in moral standard/ imperative & knows he is a sinner: **1:32, 2:14-15.**

ILLUS: Schaeffer – It's like having a little tape recorder around your neck.

- Recording all the moral judgments you make throughout your life.
- At the judgment God will play them back: *"Did you keep all these?"*

V.4. The fact is, you are despising God's patience toward you!

- God suspends judgment of us & our sins, waiting for us to turn to Him, 2 Pet.3:15,9.

2:5-11. Self-righteousness places us under God's wrath.

Vs.5- The longer you resist God and rely upon yourself for some kind of salvation, the more you're piling up God's wrath for you!

- **Newell:** "And this is said not of the reckless, but of those who boasted of their purity." 57. While the Christian stores up treasures for heaven, the non-Christian stores up judgment!
- Both the person in Rom.1 & 2 have denial problems. One denies God altogether & lives as he pleases. The other denies God will judge him because of his self-improvements. BOTH– are in peril!

Vs.5-11. God will judge each person, impartially.

μεν: Paul is not saying a man's salvation comes by his deeds: 3:9-26.

δε: He is saying that a man's deeds reflect his heart's disposition.

- **And each person will be rewarded accordingly;** Gal.6:7-8.
- A person's final judgment by God will not depend upon his race, gender, or status. It will depend upon Who he honored as God.

QUESTION: Who is the God in our lives? For whom are we living?

2:12-16. Every person is obligated to obey God, no exceptions!

Whether we are Jew or Gentile, under the Law, not under the Law, have the Bible in our language, do not have the Bible...**all will be judged on the basis of what we DO know.** The revelation we do have.

- Only if a person never broke a moral absolute, can he be righteous.
- Paul is removing every basis for any person thinking he is not sick, not a sinner, not under the wrath of God due to his sins...in order to prepare every man to HEAR the Gospel (1:16).

2:16. God's judgment includes the details of our very secrets!

- Heb.4:12-13 - A fearsome thought!
- Paul opens the depths and the criteria of man's need for salvation.

TRUE SALVATION – must reach the depths of our thoughts and attitudes!

- **It must transform our very nature** – Rom.6:6. Eph.4:29-32.
- The universe will undergo transformation, purification. Satan will be put in the Lake of Fire. Sin will flee as far as east is from west. To make a clean sweep=salvation must also renew the believer's nature.

APPLY

For the non-Christian – no matter your lifestyle or background, overt sins or very moral & religious, **you are equally guilty before God.** For **the wages of all sin is death** – in either case. You need a Savior.

Each day you do not repent & submit to Jesus Christ, means the piling up of wrath for the Day of Judgment – when you see Jesus Christ – 2:16.

To put any other label on sin & death – would result in greater danger.

For the Christian, it means that God has provided us a salvation so great, that every sinful attitude and habit of our old nature – God wants to bring to death, and replace with the very life of Christ-likeness...today!

Gal.2:20 - THIS IS TRUE SALVATION!