

Series through Romans: TRUTH: UNASHAMED, PART I

Sermon Title: Week 4, The Failure of Law

Principal Scripture: Romans 2:17-29

Date: June 24, 2018

Romans thus far: Paul's case for the Gospel

- **Recognize WBC protests. Distortion of Gospel**
- **In our day, as Pauls, there is widespread misunderstanding and distortion of the Gospel. In his letter, God leads Paul to make case for Gospel- not for the religious traditions of the day, but for the unadulterated, radical, history altering GOOD NEWS of the forgiveness, salvation, new life, and freedom that is received through FAITH in Jesus Christ.**
- **THUS FAR in his case, Paul has made his opening statement, and presented evidence of WHY WE SO DESPARATELY NEED new life from God. RECAP the big points so far... and then ask the question, WHAT DOES THIS SAY TO US TODAY. HOW IS GOD CALLING TO US THROUGH THIS TRUTH?**

† **Opening statement: A proclamation of Salvation and Righteousness by FAITH**

Romans 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes: first to the Jew, then to the Gentile. For in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed—a righteousness that is by faith from first to last, just as it is written: “The righteous will live by faith.”*

† **Evidence ‘A’: The reality of SIN**

Romans 1:21-23 *For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.*

This is a call to CONVICTION and CONFESSION

- **CONVICTION of our sin, struggles that we know are present. It is God's desire for us to be FREE from the things that hinder us, and the sin that so easily entangles us, and for this to happen, we must let the Holy Spirit do his work so we SEE- what our sin is.**
- **CONFESSION is honestly bringing these things to God. AGREEING with God that transformation needs to happen in these areas of our life, and agreeing to follow God into whatever is necessary for this transformation, healing, to happen.**
- **NOTE- as disciples of Jesus, we don't have to beg for forgiveness! WE ARE FORGIVEN. DONE DEAL. Confessing is not begging for forgiveness, but agreeing with God about the state of our heart, so that we may EXPERIENCE the obedience, the freedom that can be ours because we ARE forgiven!**
- **SO!!! IN LIGHT OF REALITY OF SIN, how is God working to bring conviction, confession, in your life?**

† **Evidence ‘B’: The reality of JUDGMENT**

Romans 2:1-4 *You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things. ² Now we know that God's judgment against those who do such things is based on truth. ³ So when you, a mere human being, pass judgment on them and yet do the same things, do you think you will escape God's judgment? ⁴ Or do you show contempt for the riches of his kindness, forbearance and patience, not realizing that God's kindness is intended to lead you to repentance?*

- **If you missed... BIG takeaway- NO place for us, as Christians, to judge others. NONE of us, in our own relative goodness, can measure up to God's righteousness. If our hope is in**

our own works, we have no hope. BUT, God is patient, his desire is for EVERYONE to come to know him.

This is a call to REPENTANCE, HUMILITY, and GRATITUDE

- *And so, as followers of Christ, on the day of Christ's judgement our hope is fully set in God's grace. SO, in light of God's patience, his goodness, in what areas of your life is he calling you to repent? Does god need to grow humility in me in how I think about and related to other people? Most of all, is there gratitude in my heart to God for the miracle of forgiveness and Grace he has given me, and you?*
- *THIS BRINGS US to our scripture for today, as Paul refutes the most common response of RELIGION to the reality of sin. This is LEGALISM. THE LAW. Paul is going to deal with this at length in the coming chapters, but here he speaks directly to the jewish members of that first generation church. But listen for how he also is speaking to you and me.*
- *EVIDENCE C of our need for God...*

† **Evidence 'C': The failure of LAW**

Romans 2:17-27 *Now you, if you call yourself a Jew; if you rely on the law and boast in God; ¹⁸ if you know his will and approve of what is superior because you are instructed by the law; ¹⁹ if you are convinced that you are a guide for the blind, a light for those who are in the dark, ²⁰ an instructor of the foolish, a teacher of little children, because you have in the law the embodiment of knowledge and truth— ²¹ you, then, who teach others, do you not teach yourself? You who preach against stealing, do you steal? ²² You who say that people should not commit adultery, do you commit adultery? You who abhor idols, do you rob temples? ²³ You who boast in the law, do you dishonor God by breaking the law? ²⁴ As it is written: "God's name is blasphemed among the Gentiles because of you."*

- *Ok, this is interesting. First of all, Paul's point is clear- he touched on this earlier in chapter, and now he drives the point home. When it comes to who God is, his truth, and how he calls us to live, KNOWLEDGE is not what is important to God! It is how we actually LIVE that matters. This sounds obvious, but for the Jews (and for much of Christian culture today), it was a BIG DEAL that we "are the ones with God's truth". We study his truth, we sing about it, we read books about it, we preach it, listen to it- To a HUGE extent our IDENTITY as Christians is bound up in the idea that WE KNOW WHAT IS TRUE, WHAT IS RIGHT, according to God!*
- *AND HERE'S THE IRONY! The idea that we know what is TRUE becomes so important that we elevate KNOWING what is true over actually LIVING this way.*
- *With scalpel precision, Paul cuts through to the heart of the issue. **WE ALL FAIL TO KEEP GOD'S LAW, therefore LAW, as a means of us attaining Rightness with God, IS OF NO USE.** In fact, in Romans 7, Paul will go even further and point out that when we try and rely upon moral/religious law for the MOTIVATION of how we live, it is not just ineffective, it is counterproductive. More on this later...*
- *AND THEN, Paul says... "god's name is blasphemed because of you!" THINK DEEPLY HERE. What is it that 'brings god's name low'.. It is NOT because the Jews had sin in their life. The gentiles did as well! We damage God's reputation not because we are imperfect, but when, as imperfect people, we HOLD OURSELVES UP AS BEING SUPERIOR, when we are not. IS THERE SUCH A THING AS GOD GIVEN MORALITY? YES!!! Does God call us, by his spirit, to increasingly live transformed lives that reflect his nature? YES!*
- *BUT FRIENDS! That which makes us righteous, connects us to God and his goodness, is NOT any moral superiority, but GOD'S MERCY AND GRACE.*

- **Paul continues, and now he cuts (pardon the pun) to the most sacred evidence the Jews possessed that they were somehow morally superior to the world around them...**

CIRCUMCISION. Physical sign of God's covenant with Israel...

²⁵ Circumcision has value if you observe the law, but if you break the law, you have become as though you had not been circumcised. ²⁶ So then, if those who are not circumcised keep the law's requirements, will they not be regarded as though they were circumcised? ²⁷ The one who is not circumcised physically and yet obeys the law will condemn you who, even though you have the written code and circumcision, are a lawbreaker.

- **As Paul would say in Galatians six... "Neither circumcision nor uncircumcision means anything; what counts is the new creation"**

This is a call to DEPENDENCE

- **Our efforts to keep God's moral law will always fall short. Nothing we can do to measure up, to be exempt from his righteous judgment. And so, we are WHOLLY DEPENDENT upon God's amazing Grace.**
- **AND to live in dependence upon God's grace means we must KNOW HIM. SEEK HIM. Let him change our HEARTS. This leads to..**

† Evidence 'D': The question of the HEART

Romans 2:28-29 A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. ²⁹ No, a person is a Jew (**belonging to God**) who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.

- **Circumcision meaning 'sealed, belong to God'- our unbreakable seal to God is not outward, but in our heart, and this is something that happens by the Holy Spirit- God's Grace in us- not by our ability to keep the rules. GOD IS AFTER OUR HEARTS**

Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God.

- **We don't crave the approval of people, our wholeness, our worth, comes from our relationship with Jesus.**

This is a call to RELATIONSHIP

- **As believers, how do we respond? This is jumping ahead into where Romans takes us, but in light of all we have discussed, God calls us to respond by...**

† Our response: Embracing the miracle of our UNION with CHRIST.

- **IN CHRIST, we are forgiven. IN CHRIST, we are a NEW CREATION, and the new creation that is our Spirit is bound inseparably to the love, the life, of Christ. HIS LIFE is OUR LIFE, HIS goodness is OUR goodness, HIS hope is our hope, HIS freedom is our freedom, HIS love is our love.**
- **We embrace this miracle by letting it CHANGE US. By growing, maturing, so that we live in the GOOD of who God is, and the GOOD of who we are because of what He has done for us.**
- **HOW IS THE HOLY SPIRIT working to bring this about in your life... now?**