

THE CHRISTIAN MANIFESTO

It was the spring of 58 AD, when Paul's friend, a woman named "Phoebe", paid a visit to Rome. Paul was in Corinth when he heard *glowing reports* of a *growing church* in Rome, the capitol of the empire. He understood the value of a church in Rome. A church in the capitol city would be strategic to the spread of Christianity.

Paul was about to depart for Jerusalem, when he handed Phoebe the letter she would deliver to the Romans. Since possible death awaited Paul, he no doubt saw this letter as a last opportunity to put down on paper the wonderful truths that God

had revealed to him. His letter to the Romans became the Christian's Manifesto.

As one man put it, "When Phoebe sailed from the port of Corinth she carried beneath the folds of her robe the whole future of Christian theology."

Paul's letter to the Romans was his theological masterpiece. Almost every Bible doctrine finds its *best defense* and *fullest explanation* in the book of Romans. This one book has sparked revivals, altered history, and transformed millions of lives.

Devotion Box - Not Ashamed Of The Gospel

Romans 1:16-17 reveals Paul's confidence, "For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "The just shall live by faith."

The greatest power on the earth is not the power of the atom, or the power of the ballot, or the power of the printed word... It is the power of the Gospel. The Gospel of Christ is by far the most potent agent of change known to mankind.

And notice here, the four W's of the Gospel...

Why it restores? It's not self-help, or wishful thinking it's the very power of God.

Who it reaches? Jew and Gentile – everyone. The Gospel is one size fits all.

When it registers? At the point of faith. God's

power doesn't come through a formula - nor is it found at the end of some religious maze. It's found by faith! Paul quotes Habakkuk, "The just shall live by faith."

What it reveals? The Gospel does what nothing else can do... it *makes you* and *keeps you* right with God. It accesses God's righteousness.

Let me make a statement you've never heard a pastor say, "*You need to be proud!*" Hey, pride is like cholesterol. There's a good kind and a bad kind...

I'm saying you need a *proper pride!* Be proud - not of possessions, obsessions, achievements, or abilities, but be proud of the Gospel! Paul was. He says, "I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ..." Are you proud of the Gospel?

GOD'S COURTROOM

Recently, I had to go to court... traffic court, that is. Understand, it was not I who was summoned, it was my eldest son. I went along to lend moral support. But let me tell you, a courtroom is an ominous place. You don't even have to be on trial - just walk into a courtroom, and it makes you a little jittery - a little jumpy.

Well, verse 18 through Romans 3, takes us to court - *God's courtroom*, that is. In this court, God is the judge. Paul is the prosecutor. And you and I are on trial.

When we get to chapter 4, Paul will begin to expound the gospel of Jesus, *but before the good news can be received - the bad news must be believed.* Before we're ready for salvation - we need to realize we're sinners.

That's what Paul does in Romans 1-3. He hauls 3 groups of people before the bar of God. In chapter 1, he prosecutes the *heathen*. Chapter 2 presents evidence condemning the *Hebrews*. Chapter 3 shows that all *humanity* is as guilty as sin.

Devotion Box - A Bondservant of Jesus

In Romans 1:1 Paul calls himself a "bondservant of Jesus". The literal translation is "love slave". Paul was a slave to Jesus not out of obligation, but out of love. He willingly surrendered his life to Jesus.

TRUTH SUPPRESSORS

Paul says in Romans 1:19 that the knowledge of God is revealed to the Gentiles in two ways: *in them*, and *to them*. Ecclesiastes 3:9 tells us that God “has put eternity in their hearts.” Whether we identify it as such, or not, there is a longing for God in the heart of every man and woman. It’s God’s homing device to bring us back.

God has also revealed Himself *to the Gentiles* through nature. It’s been said, “Nature was the first missionary.” Psalm 19:1 says, “The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament shows His handiwork.” During the French Revolution, one of the atheistic leaders challenged a believer, “We’re going to pull down all that reminds you of God.” The Christian answered, “Then pull down the stars.”

God has left a witness of Himself in the heart of every person – His glory is evident in every sunset and night sky. Verse 20 says we are without excuse.

And yet, the Gentiles suppressed the knowledge of God. It was a giant cover-up.

It reminds me of the school board who banned the Christmas nativity scene from the front yard of the elementary school. It so infuriated the principal that he wrote on the school message board, “The Board of Education is jealous of our nativity scene... for on the board they cannot find three wise men or a virgin!”

They suppress the truth! Here’s the problem... It’s not that a person *can’t believe* – there’s plenty of evidence for the existence of God. It’s that a person *won’t believe*. Once I concede that there’s a God, I can no longer call my own shots. There is Someone in authority over me, and I need to bend to His will.

WORSHIPPING THE CREATURE RATHER THAN THE CREATOR

We’re told in 1:25 they “worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator.” Over time a person resembles the object of their worship. Worship animals, and you’ll begin to live like one. Idolatry led to uncleanness and lust. You see this phenomenon with the fallacy of evolution. We teach kids they’re nothing but an animal – then we’re shocked when they turn into party animals.

It’s alarming how folks today worship and serve the creature. *Animal rights* have eclipsed *human rights*. Our government will spend millions of tax dollars to save a whale, while it helps fund an abortion industry that kills human babies.

I read of a doctor who was anesthetizing cats, then shooting them in the head with a B-B gun to develop ways

to aid human beings who had been traumatized by gunshot wounds. His research was vital to soldiers injured in the Gulf War.

Yet his experiments were shut down by animal activists who thought Snowball and Fluffy were more important than Private Jones and Sergeant Smith. It’s tragic.

It reminds me of the boy who was upset over his pet canary. He’d made a wooden cage, and was about to put the bird in his new home, when he dropped it in a can of varnish. The bird drowned. His brother tried to console him, “Johnny, please don’t cry. Look on the bright side – at least your bird had a great finish.”

Hey, I love my dog, but it’s the human being who was made in the image of God – not dogs or cats. Never put *animal life* on a par with *human life*.

FOUR TRUTHS ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY

Romans 1:26 takes us further down the path of perversion, “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.”

Today, our society calls homosexuality a *preference*. God has always called it a *perversion*. The Bible refers to it not just as “a *sin*”, but as “an *abomination*” – a particularly repulsive and disgusting sin. Verses 26-27 tell us four truths about homosexuality: *it’s not natural... not normal... not noble... and not neutral*.

First, *it’s not natural*...notice Paul’s phrases, “against nature” and “leaving the natural use”. Robert Kronmeyer writes, “Homosexuals are made, not born... From my 25 years’ experience as a clinical psychologist I firmly believe

homosexuality is a learned response to early painful experiences, thus it can be unlearned...”

Second, *it’s not normal*...Paul says the homosexual “burns in his lust”. His desire is not a normal sexual desire. It’s an appetite out-of-control and misdirected.

Third, *it’s not noble*... Paul says, “men with men committing what is shameful”. It’s a deformity of God’s intended order. It violates the sexual identities God created.

Fourth, *it’s not neutral*...Penalties come with perversions. Paul says, “receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.” There are consequences. AIDS is one of them – but there are more... not the least of which is a seared conscience. There are many gays who are anything but happy and gay!

If you’re tempted by homosexual thoughts, or trapped in a gay lifestyle, God still loves you. Your sin is not the unpardonable sin. God is able to forgive you and set you free if you’ll repent and trust in Him.

GOD'S SINDEK

People Magazine published a poll that surveyed attitudes toward different sins. Readers quantified how they felt about specific sins. Each sin was given a numeric value called the *sin coefficient*, or *sindex* - the higher the number, the worse the sin.

Murder was considered the most diabolical sin. It had a sindex of 9.84; rape, 9.77; child abuse, 9.59. At the other end of the spectrum were the sins people considered benign: selfishness, 4.92; gossip, 4.1; jealousy, 4.08; lust,

3.65.

Apparently, most of the people surveyed felt that violence and vice deserved the higher sindex - while matters of the heart were not so important. Romans 2-3 teach us that God sees sin differently than we do. *God has his own sindex*. The hypocrisy and judgmentalism of the Hebrews was just as wicked as the perversions of the Gentiles.

The heathen were unrighteous.

The Hebrews were self-righteous.

Devotion Box - Don't Despise The Goodness Of God

In Romans 2:4 Paul warns them not to despise or belittle God's grace... *for it's the goodness of God that leads a person to repentance*. Always remember - you melt a sinful heart, not by cold stares of condemnation, but by bathing a buddy in the warmth of God's grace. It's love, not judgmentalism that draws us to God. Remember 1 John 4:19, "We love Him, because He first loved us."

WHAT ABOUT THE HEATHEN ?

Romans 2:15 answers a provocative question... What happens to the heathen who never hears God's truth? The African pigmy or the aborigine in the Outback - how are they judged? Paul says even without the Gospel, they still have no excuse.

Understand, every person is born with a conscience. We're given an intuitive knowledge of right and wrong - and we're judged accordingly to that knowledge.

The reason the heathen need the Gospel is not that they're in utter darkness. Every man has been given a witness of God - a measure of light. The reason we need Jesus is because we all have failed to live up to the light we've been given. We're all guilty, and need forgiveness - and Jesus is the only source!

Devotion Box - Our Picture

According to 3:9, we need to add a stanza to one of our Sunday School songs, "Red and yellow, black and white... we're all sinners in God's sight." Paul has condemned the heathen, the Hebrews...now, all humanity.

Verse 10, "There is none righteous, no, not one..."

Verse 11, "There is none who seeks after God..." Verse 12, "There is none who does good, no, not one."

Don't come and say, "Hey, I'm not such a bad guy. I haven't hurt anybody. I'm a pretty decent fellow." Spare us the dribble.

In verse 23 God tells us, "for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God..." You might be better than me - and I might be better than him... but we've all fallen short of God's perfect standard.

A man was taking a walk through the park. He was carrying his Bible in a leather case. A group of kids thought it was a camera, and asked if he'd take their picture. The man surprised them. He said he already had their picture in the case. He took out the Bible and read Romans 3:9-18... This is our picture, too.

JUST AND THE JUSTIFIER

Verse 24 begins an amazing summation of all Christ has done for you and me. First, He justifies us freely... God treats me *just-as-if-I'd never sinned*. And this treatment comes as a free gift. It's nothing I did. It results from God's grace.

Verse 25 says Jesus became "a propitiation by His blood". "Propitiation" is a \$100 word that means "place of mercy". In the Old Testament men found mercy at a blood-splattered box - God met with man over the lid of the Ark of the Covenant. But times have changed... Indiana Jones might still be looking for the Ark, but there's a new mercy seat. Jesus is our place of mercy. In Him, we find God.

Verse 26 makes a provocative statement. We're told that Jesus died so God could "be just and the justifier". God said the wages of sin is death. When you and I sinned, somebody had to die. God can't just let you and me off the hook and be true to His word *unless somebody dies*. Hey, *the judge can never fudge!* In one sense *Jesus died for you...* He loves you and wants to forgive you. But in another sense, *Jesus died for God...* He died to *pacify God's justice*, and at the same time, *satisfy God's mercy*. The crucifixion allowed God to both *save face* and *save us*. It accomplishes *our salvation* and *God's vindication*.

Bible Scan - Romans 1-5

Calvary Chapel

If you have questions on tonight's study email Pastor Sandy - sandyadams@calvarychapel.org
For back issues of Bible Scan study guides: www.calvarychapelstonemountain.com/biblescan.htm

Calvary Chapel Announcements - Men's Prayer Breakfast, Saturday, May 4th at 8 AM
Men's Raft Trip, Sunday, May 19th—Monday, May 20th
High School/Middle School Retreat: Sunday, July 14th-Sunday, July 21st
Kid's Camp: 1-2nd grade, Tues, 7/16—Thurs 7/18; 3rd—5th grade, Thurs, 7/18—Sun, 7/21

Next Bible Scan - April 21, 2002 - Romans 6-8

“But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” - Romans 5:8

Bible Scan
Memory Verse

LIVING BY FAITH

Abraham was declared righteous in Genesis 15:6, before he was circumcised. David received God's righteousness after his sin with Bathsheba. Neither earned a right standing with God. It was given to them through faith.

I love Paul's boldness in 4:5, “to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness.” Let me read it again, “to him who does not work but believes”. It's either-or, not both. Righteousness is not some mixture of faith and works. It's not, “Jesus did 99% on the cross, but I have to throw in my 1%” - not so, no way. It's 100% faith!

Verse 4 also makes a vital point, “Now to him who

works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.” When we fail to live by faith, and try to be good enough for God, we create confusion. It's an attitude that gets in the way. We end up with the silly notion that God owes us.

It really is either faith, or works.

God's blessing is like a butterfly. Try to catch it and it'll always flutter just out of reach. But rest in God's grace, and it lands on your shoulder. When it comes to righteousness, always remember... “the Father thought it, the Son bought it, the Spirit taught it, the Bible brought it, Satan fought it, but it's faith that caught it!”

Devotion Box - A King Kong Size Love

It's amazing, but God does not expect us to act righteous before He's willing to treat us as righteous. Notice verse 6, Jesus died for us while we were still in sin. God does not require us to clean up to be clean. He takes us as we are, makes us His friends - *and then* begins to change what was for us, the unchangeable.

Romans 5:6-8 are some of the most beautiful words you'll ever read. “For when we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” Note the phrases: “without strength”, “ungodly”, “sinners”, “enemies” - before you gave a rip about God, Jesus died for you. George Jones had a country song... “Old King Kong was just a little monkey compared to my love for you.” We can say the same about God's love for us.

THE ADAM BOMB

Sin came into the world through the first man, Adam. You might call it *the first Adam bomb*. Adam did bomb, and it affected his descendants. You and I, and the whole Adamic clan, were born with a soiled and sin-stained nature.

The expression, “One bad apple spoils the whole bunch” conveys a spiritual truth. “In a sense our *death warrant* is written into our *birth certificate*.”

And some folks might argue that's unfair... “*Why should the whole world be punished for one man's mistake? Hey, let each person stand on his own.*” But if I stood on my own, eventually, I would fall like Adam. Fairness would be fatal. God allowed one man to doom his descendants so one man

could save them.

Read 5:18-19, “through one man's offense judgment came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life. For as by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so also by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous.”

In Adam I am a sinner. But in Jesus Christ the sinner becomes a saint. In Adam's family sin and death wear the britches, but in Jesus' family, grace rules the roost. Righteousness and eternal life are enjoyed by all His kids.