**Building A Strong Faith: A Study of the Book of Romans**

**Reflecting God’s Image**

**Romans 1:23-32 February 25, 2024**

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As we begin 2024, I can’t think of a more important asset than a “strong faith” relationship with God through Jesus Christ. Our world is filled with both great opportunities and great challenges. The apostle Paul writes, “The righteous shall live by faith.” The book of Romans will map out a path for us how we can be rightly connected to God, ourselves, and others. “Romans is a feast for one’s soul.” There is an amazing work that God desires to do in us through His Son Jesus and empowered by His Holy Spirit. My prayer is that we will grow in our understanding of the gospel of God. The result will be a strong faith that is able to draw strength from God no matter what comes our way. Today, we will see how mankind has strayed so far from reflecting God’s image. God desires for us to be image bearers. Our image bearing capacity is restored when we repent and acknowledge Jesus Christ as our Lord. The more I acknowledge Him in my life, the greater my reflection of Christ will be.

Romans 1:23and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.24Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,25because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.26For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. 28And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.29They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

**Why Study Romans?** Romans 4:22That is why his faith was “counted to him as righteousness.”23But the words “it was counted to him” were not written for his sake alone, 24but for ours also. It will be counted to us who believe in him who raised from the dead Jesus our Lord, 25who was delivered up for our trespasses and raised for our justification.

**Big Idea: The more I acknowledge and yield to Jesus Christ as Lord, the more of Him I will reflect in my life. The less value I give to Him, the darker my life becomes.**

**Spiritual Growth Questions for February 25, 2024**

**Opener:** Who is the most difficult person for you to share your faith experience? Why?

1. **Read Gen. 1:27, 2:24; Eph. 5:22-27, Rev. 19:7-9**. What is the Bible’s **position** on marriage and the gender identity of humans? What is God’s original design for humans? **Romans 1:18** describes a society that is “suppressing” holding down the existence of God. How is this suppression being seen in our world today?
2. **Read Romans 1:23-25**. Why do you think Paul addresses idolatry as the root cause of impurity and dishonorable passions? How could this approach of (ungodliness first, deal with righteousness 2nd) impact our posture in evangelism?
3. As you look at Paul’s list in **Romans 1:26-32**, how does this list square up with the thought that man is basically good and does not need God to live a righteous life? Reading these verses, how would describe what man is receiving by rejecting God and His ways?
4. **Read I Thessalonians 4:3-8**. What is Paul teaching on how to honor God with our bodies? What are we saying to God if we abandon His creative design for our lives? Why does sexual sin block our reflection of God? Consider the consequences of rejecting God’s truth. How should we help those who a struggling with sexual sin?
5. **Read I Timothy 1:12-16.** How did Paul think about himself when sharing the gospel vs1:15-16? **Read I Corinthians 5:9-13**. Discuss the posture God wants us to have towards those outside of the faith? What suggestions have you found helpful?
6. Consider this quote as a guideline: “Truth without love is brutality and love without truth is hypocrisy.” Wiersbe **Read Ephesians 4:15**. Why is it difficult to live this truth out in our culture?
7. Consider the BLESS approach: **B**egin with prayer, **L**isten with compassion, **E**at together, **S**erve sacrificially, **S**hare your testimony.

**Prayer: Let light shine out of darkness:** 2 Corinthians 4:6For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**Resources:** Rebecca McLaughlin *Confronting Christianity*, Rosa Butterfield-*Five Lies of Our Anti Christian Age*, *The Gospel Comes with a House Key*, Kevin DeYoung *What does Bible really say about Homosexuality?,* Sam Allberry- *Is God Anti-Gay?*

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I Tim 1:8Now we know that the law is good, if one uses it lawfully, Rom.3:20

(I Tim. 1:9-11 life before Christ, I Tim.1:12-16-life after Christ).

Acts 2:37Now when they heard this they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Brothers, what shall we do?”38And Peter said to them, “Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 40And with many other words he bore witness and continued to exhort them, saying, *“Save yourselves from this crooked generation.”*

Romans 5:8but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Romans 1:16 For I am not ashamed of the Gospel

Romans 8:5“live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, live according to the Spirit set their minds on things of the Spirit.

**Our greatest need is a right relationship with God through Jesus Christ.**

III. **Practice**: Godly reflections shine by \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ and His \_\_\_\_\_\_. (after ungodliness then address unrighteousness)

Romans 1:28-31And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

I Thessalonians 4:3For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from sexual immorality; 4that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor,5not in the passion of lust like the Gentiles who do not know God; (World-you don’t have to do this, Word- we must learn)

BLESS- **B**egin with prayer, **L**isten with compassion, **E**at together, **S**acrificial acts of service, **S**hare my testimony.

How to keep my reflection of God strong:

1. Beware of \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ my life (Let Jesus in-Psalm 139:23-24)
2. Prayer- Ask God for \_\_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_ on every situation. Ask for power
3. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_ by His Word- (Matthew 4:4) (Let God and His thoughts rule)

Philippians 1:11-filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God. (Not my will but thy will be done)

Colossians 3:16-Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.

2 Corinthians 4:6For God, who said, “Let light shine out of darkness,” has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

**Our world desperately needs Christ followers to reflect His image.**

**Position, Posture, Practice**

1. **Position:** Mankind’s reflectors are seriously \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and in a \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ spiral.

Genesis 1:27 So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.(Mt 19:4 &Mk 7:19-23) Jesus

My reflector is messed up both from the way I was born and also from the choices that I have made. (Psalm 51:5, Romans 3:23). I have fallen desires that if I follow them, they will lead me to a life away from God.

Romans 1:23and *exchanged* the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things

Romans 1:25 Because they *exchanged* the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! (Exchanged the authentic for the counterfeit vv.23, 25, 26,27 and the consequence is God gave them over to what they desired vv.24,26,28)

Romans 1:21- For although they knew God, they did not *honor* him as God or give *thanks* to him, 1:28 And since they did not see fit to *acknowledge* God 1:32 Though they *know* God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Reject/acknowledge God-

Romans 1:29They were *filled* with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. (This list is only partial but impacts all of us)

Two things are always happening in our lives. We are either exchanging **truth** for **lies** or **lies** for the **truth**. Dreadful consequences happen when a culture rejects the knowledge of God. (Replace God with fallen passions)

**Idolatry is a devotion to the made and not our Maker. Idolatry always leads to unrighteousness. Unrighteousness is extremely destructive.**

1. **Posture**: Begin by \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ the truth of our greatest need: A \_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ with God. (start with addressing ungodliness)

Romans 1:17 & 1:18 revelation of righteousness vs. revelation of wrath

Ephesians 4:15Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, …

Truth without love is brutality and love without truth is hypocrisy. Wiersbe