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Sermon Notes

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God's Decree Against All Evils

Romans 1:29-32

Pandora's Box... the fountain of all evil

I. Review

A. The Gospel of God: Supernatural Power for Complete Salvation

B. Righteousness of God: Both Our Greatest Problem AND Our Only Salvation

Central Idea: all evil in the world flows from the exchange of the glory of God for created things, the exchange of the truth of God for a lie, the rejection of the knowledge of God for depravity

The exchange results in a depraved mind... and from that mind flows all evil

Five questions: 1) What is the source of these 21 evils? 2) Why does Paul give us this list of evils? 3) What is God's response to these evils? 4) What amazing glimmer of hope does vs. 32 hold out to sinners? 5) What is the ultimate remedy to this dire problem?

II. The Source of the Twenty-one Evils

A. Humanity's basic need: righteousness before God

1:17 "For in the gospel, a righteousness of God is revealed..."

1. God's righteousness: perfect hatred of all evil... will result in judgment for sin

2. BUT in Romans 1:17... a "righteousness FROM God is what is revealed"

Martin Luther's great discovery... a righteousness that SAVES

3. Avenue of righteousness: FAITH

1:17 “a righteousness that is by faith from first to last...”

- a. lit. “from faith to faith”
- b. whole salvation process a gift from God... THROUGH FAITH

4. Result: LIFE (both fruitfulness, and survival)

1:17 “as it is written, ‘The righteous will live by faith.’”

- a. “live” may mean “thrive into fruitfulness”
- b. BUT in context = “survive judgment day”

5. What’s the danger? The WRATH OF GOD!!!

1:18 “FOR the wrath of God is being revealed against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness.”

- a. present wrath... three-fold cycle mentioned
- b. future wrath: judgment day, the “day of God’s wrath”

Romans 2:5 “But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself on the day of God’s wrath when His righteous judgment will be revealed.”

- c. righteousness from God is only hope on that day... a SURE & CERTAIN HOPE!!

Romans 5:9 “Since we have now been justified by His blood, how much more shall we be saved from God’s wrath through Him!”

B. Three-fold cycle of wrath in vs. 28

1. Our rejection of the knowledge of God within us

vs. 28 “Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God...”

- a. what knowledge? The four-fold knowledge of God mentioned in vs. 20

God is eternal; God is powerful; God is infinite; God is kindly generous

- This knowledge is “suppressed” in vs. 18

- b. this knowledge is deemed “unworthy” in vs. 28
 - c. human beings were given minds to appraise the worth of God (WORTHSHIP)
 - d. instead, they think the knowledge of God is like refuse to be rejected
 - e. therefore, our mind have become corrupt already
2. God’s judgment on humanity: given over to a depraved mind
- a. God’s wrath: since you think this way, I’ll give you over to it totally
 - b. cannot think properly about God, life, the universe, anything
 - c. modern appraisals of human condition show this

“What we need is more education”

Amazing! Holocaust devised by HIGHLY EDUCATED men

- d. from the depraved mind comes every kind of evil
3. Humanity acts out that exchange in bodily forms of evil

vs. 29-31 “They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed, and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant, and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless.”

Basic lesson here is that all this incredible variety of evil comes from one source: the rejection of the knowledge of God as something unworthy of having inside us

Every evil comes from failing to know God

III. Why Does Paul List These Twenty-one Evils?

- A. That we may understand their common source

Piper: “If America has the highest murder rate in the western world, it has to do with God. If our corporate executives are insatiably greedy, it has to do with God. If our politicians are deceitful, promising things they never intend to deliver, it has to do with God. If our television talk show hosts are insolent and boastful, it has to do with God. If our children talk back to their parents and insolently and disrespectfully

refuse to obey them, it has to do with God. If we walk by needy people and never give even the slightest thought to meeting their needs, it has to do with God. That's the point of this list. Wherever we're sinking in sin, it is because we have jumped off the rock of the glory of God."

B. That we may understand their universal spread

1. The completeness of this list paves the way for full understanding
2. Every person on the face of the earth should see themselves reflected here

Romans 3:10 "There is no one righteous, not even one."

3. This is a net that catches every fish on the face of the earth

C. That we may see ourselves in the list

1. This is not simply theory

- a. extreme sins: wickedness, depravity, murder, God-hatred, ruthlessness, inventors of evil
- b. common sins:
 - Envy: have you ever wanted some earthly benefit that another person has?
 - Strife: have you ever had an argument with a loved one?
 - Deceit: have you ever willingly misled someone because the truth would have put you at a disadvantage?
 - Malice: have you ever harbored resentment toward another person because of some past event?
 - Gossip: have you ever spread a story about a person that you would have wanted concealed if it had been you?
 - Slander: have you ever opened up that mouth of yours and spoken in such a way that someone else's reputation took a hit?
 - Insolence: have you ever shown open disrespect to an authority figure?

- Boastfulness: have you ever bragged about your capabilities or achievements?
 - Disobedience to parents: A MODERN PLAGUE!!!!
2. “Now that’s not fair, Paul...listing a little gossip right next to murder”
- These sins not equally evil
 - HOWEVER... these sins equally damning if not cleansed
 - NOT “basically a good person”!!! Stare into the mirror of God’s standards

D. That we may be appalled at the darkness of human depravity

1. **Heaven is not like this**
2. We are SO USED TO EVIL
3. Be appalled at the river of depravity
4. See that many of these evils lie in your own heart as well

Sibbes: “A toad is an ugly thing, but it is even uglier in your own breast!”

E. That we may yearn for the solution

1. Seeing this list should make you desperate for a Savior
2. It should crush any self-righteousness
3. It should get you ready for grace

What is God’s response to this river of depravity?

IV. God’s Righteous Decree: Death for Doers and Approvers of Evil

vs. 32 “Although they know God’s righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do those very things but also approve of those who practice them.”

A. God’s Righteous Decree

1. “Decree” = God’s unchangeable law
2. All of God’s decrees are righteous are perfect

3. This decree = all sin deserves the ultimate death penalty
 - a. physical death decreed as a visible reminder of ultimate penalty
 - b. eternal spiritual death in hell the ultimate penalty

***Romans 6:23* “The wages of sin is death...” [God’s righteous decree]**

B. “Sin boldly???”

Illus. Bumper sticker = “Sin boldly” ... ALL SIN IS BOLD SIN... “They know that those who do such things deserve death...!!” YET THEY CONTINUE!!

C. PIPER: Spiritual “Dr. Kevorkians”

Illus. Dr. Jack Kevorkian... “physician-assisted suicide”

1. If all sin deserves the death penalty, these habits of sin are like spiritual suicide
2. Sinners apart from the grace of God not only commit spiritual suicide
3. They also approve of others doing the same
 - a. it makes them feel good when others sin
 - b. that is why “TOLERANCE” is such a virtue in America today
 - c. we like a climate of universal sin, because it makes us feel safe
4. Part of this approval is even assistance

Illus. The porn industry

- Jesus: “Everyone who looks at a woman lustfully has committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and throw it away... it is better for you to lose one part of you body than for your whole body to go to hell.”
- U.S. News & World Report: Eric Schlosser... Porn industry so successful, it now has its own trade journal, *Adult Video News*
- This journal reported that the number of X-rated video rentals rose from 75 million in 1985 to 665 million in 1996
- In 1996, \$8 billion spent on pornographic materials in America

- Schlosser: add up money spent on Broadway productions, regional & non-profit theaters, opera, ballet, jazz & classical musical performances, they are still less than strip clubs alone

Everyone involved in this industry is not only committing spiritual suicide, but assisting a whole nation to do it as well

Illus. #2: Rejoicing in gossip... "I shouldn't say anything..." "O go ahead..."

D. A Glimmer of Hope In All This Darkness: What They Know

1. Amazing revelation: what all humans know
 - a. Four-fold knowledge of God Himself (vs. 20)

God is eternal; God is powerful; God is infinite; God is kindly generous

- b. ALSO knowledge of God's decree against evil

vs. 32 *"Although THEY KNOW GOD'S RIGHTEOUS DECREE that those who do such things deserve death..."*

Amazing! The Bible tells us where we can start with evangelism

2. Knowledge Deeper Than Conscious Thought

"But I don't feel like I know this"

- a. constant suppression of the guilt
 - b. constant twisting of internal knowledge
 - c. BUT IT'S THERE!!!!
3. A Tremendous Starting Point for Evangelism
 - a. first two points we try to communicate:
 - There is a powerful, eternal, infinite, kind God
 - God's hates evil and will punish it
 - b. Romans 1 tells us they know this already!!
 - c. USE it in evangelism!!

"I know this may seem strange to you, that there is a personal God who created all things and who shows His personality in creation, and that He will judge all evil acts and thoughts... but the Bible says you know these things deep in your heart. When you are alone and you can't seem to shake these thoughts, humble yourself & ask God to show you these truths. And when you feel the need for forgiveness, can I please tell you the remedy?"

Five questions: 1) What is the source of these 21 evils? 2) Why does Paul give us this list of evils? 3) What is God's response to these evils? 4) What amazing glimmer of hope does vs. 32 hold out to sinners? 5) What is the ultimate remedy to this dire problem?

V. What Is the Remedy for All This Evil? The Gospel!!!

"Three great reversals"

- A. Reversal of God's wrath against our unrighteousness
- B. Reversal of God's handing us over to a depraved mind
- C. Reversal of the pollution of our own mind so that we can serve God purely

All three are available in the gospel!!

- A. Reversal of God's wrath against our unrighteousness

1:17 "For in the gospel, the righteousness of God is revealed, a righteousness that is by faith from first to last; as it is written, 'The righteous shall live by faith.'"

God's righteous wrath against us for this river of evil is extinguished by faith in Christ

- B. Reversal of God's handing us over to a depraved mind

Romans 6:17 "Thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed that form of teaching to which you were entrusted."

- 1. Formerly, God handed you over to a depraved mind
- 2. NOW He hands you over to the full gospel message
- 3. THIS GOSPEL: power to transform & to carry you to heaven!!

- C. Reversal of the pollution of our own mind so that we can serve God purely

- 1. Marvelous gift at conversion: a new mind

1 Corinthians 2:16 "We have the mind of Christ."

2. This new mind must be constantly renewed by the Spirit through Scripture

Romans 12:2 “Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is, His good pleasing and perfect will.”

3. This reverses the lingering effects of the former depravity of your mind in sin