

THE BOOK OF ROMANS

"Human Devolution"

Romans 1:21-24

March 11, 1984

INTRODUCTION

1. The Gospel demonstrates the righteousness of God (vv. 16, 17). It is communicated from one man's faith to another man's faith. There is no other way: the just shall live by faith (v. 17).

2. But there are those who hold down (restrain) the truth in unrighteousness. They do this with all ungodliness and unrighteousness (v. 19). This is a terrible indictment against unbelieving humanity.

3. The actions of men (v. 19) are wilfully done in the face of God's gracious revelation of Himself in nature as a God of power and personality (v. 20). Scripture declares: humanity is utterly without excuse! The support of this is given fully in the following verses. Note God's reasons for such a definitive statement:-

1. KNOWLEDGE v. 21

The verb "know" means to know by personal experience, this is a bold Biblical statement. Darwin's view of the "savages" on Tierra Del Fuego was proved wrong. They did have a religion. Cicero is right (in his De Natura Deorum): "Nature herself has imprinted on the minds of all the idea of God." This is clearly the original situation. Scripture, however, declares man's devolution. Listen to the horrible path of degradation:

a. They glorified not

Here is the refusal to worship God as Creator in accordance with the knowledge they possessed. They knew what was right, but did not do it.

b. They thanked not

Here is base ingratitude. It is the marble-heated fiend. It stamps a man for what he is. Shakespeare said: "I hate ingratitude more in a man than lying, vainness, babbling, drunkenness, or any taint of vice." Indeed, ingratitude is a parent sin and brings forth a host of others.

c. They thought not

"Imaginations" is better rendered "reasonings." These became vain in their thoughts and speculations about God. It shows a distaste for the verities God had manifested in them. The verb "became vain" almost always refers to idolatry (cf. Acts 14:15). So here

is degradation in the intellectual realm.

d. They saw not

"Foolish" is "senseless, stupid." Thus the heart became dark and wandered blindly in the mazes of folly. What horrible blindness. This explains John 1:5. In mercy God sent John the Baptist to tell the world that God's light is on!

2. PROFESSION vv 22, 23

Here is an expression to the conceit of wisdom. It is downright boasting to be wise. It is the exaltation of man, like a seesaw. If man is exalted, God is debased. It smacks of Cain's fruit basket substituted for the blood sacrifice (cf. Jude 11). In this situation, other dreadful issues ensued:

a. They became fools

This is God's estimate of the philosophers and religious leaders of humanity. They are "foolosophers." To resist divine revelation is to be characterized by God in the most scornful terms (Psa. 94:11). Remember: to put man's feeble thoughts up against the all-wisdom of God is simple foolishness (Isa. 55:8, 9). It relates to being a moron (so Greek).

b. They changed glory

The verb signifies to "exchange." Think of it: God for man; the incorruptible for the corruptible; the essence for the image obviously. This is idolatry. Then a deeper step is taken--to birds, beasts, and creeping things. Note: Greeks had Apollo; Romans the eagle; Egyptians the bull; Assyrians the serpent.

CONCLUSION The first stroke in the song of doom is now heard--God gave man up (v. 24)! This is divine judgment. God's abandonment of men is due to sin (cf. Psa. 22:1). He never abandons a true believer (2 Tim. 2:13), but where there is sin against God, sin is the punishment. God abandons man to the consequences of his own doings. Those who did not honor God cause dishonor among themselves in sensuality. What a judgment! Only through personal faith in Christ is there hope. Will you avail yourself of Him today? Do it without delay.