

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

Introduction

I was considering the words of the late Dr. James Kennedy when he said, “in the beginning God created man in His own image, but men have returned the favor ever since.” Have you ever noticed how people describe or define God? There are as many version of God as there are people who utter them. What follows is written as the result of a deep desire to know the God of the Bible. In this review, I will attempt to answer the following questions from Paul’s epistle to the Romans.

1. What does God reveal about His character, nature, attributes and desires?
2. What does God reveal about His intention toward us?
3. What does God reveal about the condition of men before His intervention?
4. What does God reveal about the condition of men after His intervention?
5. What does God reveal about the action to which men are called?

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

Chapter One

What does God reveal about Himself in this epistle?

Describing or defining God is no easy task. The apostle Paul is faced with a similar challenge as he attempts to describe how God provides salvation for the Gentiles.

He states, “Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and His ways past finding out. Who has known the mind of the LORD? Who has become His counselor?”

This chapter will not attempt to comprehensively unveil God in all His fullness; but instead will only offer a glimpse of God out of the epistle to the Romans. Let’s begin. In his epistle, Paul makes reference to three divine characters. He introduces us to Father, His Son and the Holy Spirit.

A Portrait of Father-God

Paul introduces us to the first major character in his epistle – God as Father. To most of us, the word Father does not rouse fear, but comfort and acceptance. When I think of my father, I think of undying and unconditional love.

Paul indicates that God has manifested Himself to the human race. He is not hiding from us. God’s invisible attributes such as His eternal power and Godhead are said to be clearly seen and understood since the beginning of time and through His creation. What kind of Father is God?

He is first of all a person. This epistle outlines several characteristics. Father is said to be righteous, incorruptible, impartial, and faithful. He is known for His love, goodness, forbearance, longsuffering and mercy. God is represented as omniscient, wise and is identified as a God of law and ordinances. He is said to be the source of eternal

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

power and truth. He has a will to execute, a purpose and a plan to accomplish. As father, He also reveals His severity and wrath when necessary.

Paul states that as a Father, God has good news for the world. He has produced children, sons, and heirs. He has granted His offspring the gift of eternal life and has brought them into His kingdom. His children serve as willing servants, do His work and keep His commandments. Paul then moves to share a wonderful secret - **Father dwells in you.**

A Portrait of the Son of God

The second character revealed in this epistle is Jesus. He is declared to be the Son of God and is called the Christ. Born of the seed of David, He is said to be the firstborn of many brethren. Father delivered Him to death and then raised Him up. Jesus is called Lord of both the dead and living and is said to offer men the free gift of eternal life. Death is said to have no dominion over Him.

Jesus calls us, loves us, approves us and chooses members of the human race to become His bondservants, ministers and apostles who in turn do His work. He grants us abundance of grace, the gift of righteousness and justification of life. He saves us from wrath, and reconciles us to God through His death. He gives us peace with God, access to His presence and causes us to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. He is rich to us when we call upon Him, grants us redemption and has become a propitiation for all. He is the power of God unto salvation, knows the mind of the Spirit and intercedes for us according to the will of God. He searches the heart and will judge all the secrets of men when they appear before His judgment seat. He is the end of the law as a source of righteousness and desires that we reign in life. He is called the root of Jesse, a stumbling block and a rock of offence. Paul also mentions that Jesus is said to be over all eternally blessed God. Paul states that the Son came, lived, died, rose, is sitting at the right hand of God and then moves to share a wonderful secret - **the Son dwells in you.**

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

A Portrait of the Holy Spirit

The epistle to the Romans also introduces a third character - the Holy Spirit. The Spirit is identified in various ways. He is called the Spirit of life, the Spirit of adoption, the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit of God, and the Spirit of holiness. Paul declares “the Spirit is life.” He then discusses the gifts that flow from the Spirit. Those gifts include the love of God, joy, power, and freedom from the law of sin and death. The Spirit is said to bear witness, help our weaknesses, make intercession for us, sanctify us, and work mighty signs and wonders by His power. Men are enabled to serve God in the newness of the Spirit, are empowered to walk and live according to the Spirit and are called to mind the things of the Spirit. Paul then moves on to reveal a wonderful secret - **the Spirit now dwells in you.**

Concluding Remarks

In this epistle, a revelation of Father, Son and Holy Spirit are presented. If we acknowledge that we have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, repent by turning away from our sin and embrace God’s gift of forgiveness and eternal life, confess with our mouth that Jesus Christ is our propitiation and believe in our heart that Father has raised Him from the dead, we will be saved from eternal death and God’s wrath.

After reviewing this epistle, we may not remember all the details about the character, nature, attributes, and desires of God, His Son, or the Holy Spirit; however, it is important that we understand that the three major characters revealed in Paul’s epistle (Father, Son, Holy Spirit) want to make us a home. We may not fully comprehend, but we can NOW enjoy their company and fullness because we are their new habitation. The three characters discussed in this epistle do not want to hide from us. We do not have to travel to find them. They are within. The question remains. If

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

they live in us, what is their intention? Why are they indwelling? What are they up to? That will be the topic of discussion in the next chapter.

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

Chapter Two

What does the epistle to the Romans reveal about God's intention toward the human race?

In the last chapter, we saw how God, His Son and the Holy Spirit indwell those who have confessed and believed in Jesus. Now that Father, Son and the Holy Spirit live in us, what are their intentions?

The epistle to the Romans informs us that God has promised good news through His prophets. He has revealed his righteousness from faith to faith and has chosen to unveil Himself by making visible His attributes through creation. He wants to make public His eternal power and Godhead. Paul states, God has stretched out His hands all day long." God has taken the initiative to move in our direction.

God's Good Intention – The Positive Side

God has called us according to His purpose and has conferred upon us abundance of grace and peace. He desires to establish us according to His gospel, offer salvation, lead us to repentance, grant us the riches of His goodness, forbearance and longsuffering. He has rewarded us with eternal life, glory, and honor. He has imputed His righteousness, redeemed and justified us. He has passed over our sins, and given us life. He strengthens our faith, pours out His love, saves us from wrath, and reconciles us to Himself. He desires that we reign in life and walk in newness. He unites us, frees us from the slavery of sin, and makes us slaves of righteousness. He desires that we bear fruit to holiness and commands that we serve Him in newness of the Spirit. His desire is that we walk according to the Spirit. He will set us free from the law of sin and death. He desires that we be led by His Spirit. He wants to make us His sons and joint heirs with Christ. He wants to help us in our weaknesses and intervene on our behalf. He calls, justifies, glorifies, delivers, and freely gives us all things. He foreknows, and predestines us to be conformed to the image of His Son. He makes us more than

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

conquerors, rescues us from shame and is rich toward us. He increases our faith, shows us mercy, and transforms us by the renewing of our mind. He gives us a measure of faith, makes us stand and enables us to be like-minded toward each other. He has received us, fills us with joy and has crushed Satan under our feet. He gives life to our mortal bodies, offers to make provision for its redemption, and promises to deliver us from its death.

God's Good Intention - The Negative Side

What happens when men reject God's love, mercy, goodness, forbearance, longsuffering and forgiveness? God gives them up to the lust of their hearts, vile passions, and a debase mind. None escape His judgment. Those who rebel against His offer of salvation and undermine His plan will become recipients of wrath on the day of judgment. Indignation, tribulation and anguish are reserved to those who do evil. God will judge the secrets of all men by Jesus Christ. He is said to show mercy to whom He wills. He is willing to graft into His family those who turn to Him. He will judge those who resist the authority and ordinance He has established. All will appear before the judgment seat of Christ and will be judged according to their deeds.

Concluding Remarks

A review of Paul's epistle to the Romans indicates that God has good intentions toward the human race. The only obstacle between God's best is and us is our lack of surrender to Him. God has made full provision. It is now necessary that we appropriate and make ours all He has accomplished. He is not an old bearded tyrant sitting on some lofty throne demanding our allegiance because He has some psychological need for our obedience. Father, His Son, the Holy Spirit are indwelling us because they want to bless us beyond belief. Why are we in need of so much intervention from Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Is there a problem? Are we flawed as human beings?

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

Chapter 3

What does God reveal about the condition of men before His intervention?

Paul reveals a dark picture of the human condition. Before men are rescued by Father, His Son and the Holy Spirit, they are found in a hopeless and helpless situation. All are declared to be sinners. The list of allegations against the human race is long. Men have suppressed the truth of righteousness, exchanged it for a lie and have chosen to worship and serve the creature rather than the creator. They have failed to glorify and thank God, have become futile in their thoughts and their heart has become darkened. They are filled with unrighteousness. Their practices include things such as sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, and maliciousness. They are full of envy, murder, strife, and deceit. They are evil-minded, whisperers, backbiters and haters of God. They are violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, and unmerciful.

According to Paul, they have condemned themselves and have constituted themselves as deserving of death. They have despised the riches of God's goodness, forbearance, and longsuffering. They refuse to understand, do not seek after God, have turned aside, and have become unprofitable. Their throat is said to be an open tomb, their tongue practices deceit, the poison of asps is said to be under their lips. Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood. Destruction and misery are in their way. They do not know the way of peace and there is no fear of God before their eyes.

Men are under God's wrath and considered His enemies. They are disobedient and present their bodies as instruments of unrighteousness to sin. They are fruitless and have become slaves to the law of sin and death. They are wretched and walk according to the flesh. Their mind is at enmity against God. They are not subject to the law of God. They do not have the Spirit of Christ. They seek to establish their own

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

righteousness and refuse to obey the gospel. They are contrary and do not see, or hear. They resist the ordinances of God and have brought judgment on themselves. They serve their belly and deceive the heart of the simple.

Concluding Remarks

According to the epistle to the Romans, this is the pre conversion condition of the human race before God, His Son and the Holy Spirit begin their work. Paul summarizes that condition when he states, “Wretched man that I am, who shall deliver me ...” Can we be rescued from the condition into which we have been born? Is change possible?

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

Chapter Four

What does God reveal about the condition of men after His Intervention?

Paul's epistle portrays a wonderful picture of the masterpiece God is willing to create if we surrender to His work. God, His Son and the Holy Spirit will do in us what we are unable to do in ourselves. When we surrender our lives, multiple miracles take place all at once.

The miracles begin when He calls us and separates us to the gospel. We become recipients of grace and peace, are justified, inherit eternal life, and are made righteous. We are redeemed, forgiven, find peace with God, and His love is poured out in our hearts. We are saved from wrath, reconciled, receive abundance of grace and inherit the gift of righteousness. We are baptized, buried and raised with Christ. Our old man is crucified with Him and we become alive to God. We begin to live under grace, are set free from sin and condemnation. We are delivered from the law of sin and death, and receive the Spirit of adoption. His glory is revealed in us. We discover that He has foreknown us and wills to glorify us. He is rich toward us, grants us a measure of faith, brings us good tidings and gives us increased faith through the hearing of His Word.

We are established, walk in newness, bear fruit of holiness and become profitable. The Spirit helps our weakness and intercedes for us. God has freely given us all thing.

We are His children and called sons. We become bondservants of Jesus Christ and beloved of God. We are saints, and slaves of righteousness. We are called His people, are slaves of God and members of one body. We are fellow workers of Christ and have become heirs of God.

We now seek to edify one another and serve with our spirit in the gospel. We now bear fruit to God, delight in His law according to the inward man, and serve His

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

law with our minds. We are led by and walk according to the Spirit of God. We are spiritually minded, set our mind on the things of the Spirit and are filled with all knowledge. Father gives our mortal body life and puts to death its deeds. We await the redemption of our body and are now more than conquerors in Christ.

Concluding Remarks

Father, His Son and the Holy Spirit are at work in us to restore and redesign us according to the image of His Son. What was lost because of our sin can now be fully restored. Paul indicates that we initially lost God's outshining. That glory is restored when we surrender. The process of Divine transformation will continue throughout life. Why not get started today. God has a wonderful plan to transform us into a masterpiece.

To what end is God doing all this? He is moved and motivated by love. As Father, Son and Holy Spirit work on the process of re-creating us, we are allowed the privilege of service. We are called to action.

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

Chapter Five

What is God's Expectation of Us?

The epistle to the Romans not only reveals three main characters, God's intention and desire to recreate us, but also outlines the expectations God has for us. We are called to action. That action will be outlined in this chapter. Our call to action can be divided into activities that relate to the individual, God and others.

Actions Related to the Individual

In relation to the individual, we are called to retain God in our knowledge, make our boast in Him and approve those things that are excellent. We are to believe in Him and rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. We are to mind the things of the Spirit, be diligent and fervent in spirit, and have regard for good things. We are to seek after God and submit to His righteousness by faith. We are to reckon ourselves to be dead to sin, but alive to God. We are to avoid conforming ourselves to this world and be transformed by the renewing of our mind. We are to prove what is considered the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. We are to think soberly, not more highly than we ought, but as God has dealt to each one of us a measure of faith. We are to abhor what is evil and cling to what is good. We are to put to death the deeds of the body and to ensure we do not avenge ourselves, but rather give place to wrath.

We are called to live by faith and serve the creator. We are to be a guide to the blind, a light to those in darkness, an instructor to the foolish, and a teacher of babes. We are called to walk and serve in newness of life. We should not allow sin to reign in our mortal body or present our members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin. We are called to be slaves of righteousness, to hear the word of God and present our bodies a living sacrifice. We are called to use gifts such as prophecy, ministry, teaching, exhortation, giving, leadership, and mercy.

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

We are called to cast off the works of darkness, put on the armor of light, and pursue the things which make for peace and edification.

Actions Related to Others

In relation to others, we are called to be kindly affectionate and give preference to one another with brotherly love. We are to avoid setting our mind on high things, associate with the humble and not be wise in our own opinion. We must be subject to authorities, love one another, put on the Lord Jesus Christ and make no provision for the flesh. We are to shun the judgment of another's servant, be fully convinced in our own mind and avoid showing contempt for our brothers. We are to avoid putting a stumbling block before or cause others to fall. We are to be of one mind, be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, and distribute to the needs of the saints. We are to be given to hospitality, bless those that persecute us, rejoice with those that rejoice and weep with those who weep. We are to feed and give our enemies to drink. We are to be of the same mind toward one another. We are to avoid repaying evil for evil and if possible to live peaceably with all men. We are to love others without hypocrisy, overcome evil by doing good, render to all their due whether it be taxes, customs, fear or honor. We are to avoid being in debt to anyone and owe them only love. We are to avoid committing adultery, murder, theft, bearing false witness and coveting. We are to love our neighbor as ourselves, receive the weak in faith, and avoid disputing over doubtful things.

We are to ensure that we do not destroy God's work and avoid doing those things that cause others to stumble or become offended. We are to be strong and bear with the scruples of the weak. We are called to note those who cause divisions and offenses and avoid them.

Reflections: The Epistle to the Romans

Actions Related to God

In relation to God, we are called to glorify Him with one mouth and present ourselves as alive from the dead. We are to continue steadfast in prayer, walk, live and be led by His Spirit. We are to bow our knee and confess Him.

Concluding Remarks

Paul's epistle provides a long list of behaviors that will be evident in the life of the individual who is in the process of being changed by God. The behaviors mentioned are not a list of commandments that lead to faith. They are evidence of faith. Upon review, the epistle to the Romans indicates that our call to action is inward, outward and upward. God's intervention will transform our worldview and actions. God will stir in us a passion to strengthen our relationship with God, improve ourselves and become a blessing to those around us.