

Secrets that Won't Remain

Romans 2:1-29 NIV The Gentiles live in darkness that God gave them over to, now Paul addresses the sins of the Jews.

- I. The moralist.
 - a. The sin of humanists is that they deny that they need a Savior – I am a good person in my own eyes and am not accountable to God, if He even exists. (1:19-32) The sin of the moralist is that they deny their need for a Savior because they are their own savior by their performance.
 - b. Outward performance without inward reality leads to pride and presumption.
 - i. We are better because we are Jewish – God chose us.
 - ii. We are better because we know the law.
 - iii. The evidence we are better is that we are circumcised and they aren't.
 - c. Paul confronts the pride and presumption of the moralist. Not just the Jewish people of that day, but all who are trusting their version of Christianity instead of Christ. Those who boast of their denomination, or their superior doctrine, or their superior liturgies, or their spontaneous worship. All those who presume they're right with God based on their performance rather than on Christ.
 - i. You think you're better because you know more than they do? Yet your moralism has no power to change the inside. You do the very things they do even though they may be hidden from the outside world. (Romans 2:1) Matthew 23:25-26 NIV "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence. ²⁶Blind Pharisee! First clean the inside of the cup and dish, and then the outside also will be clean." *Moralism cannot clean up the inside of the cup, so it leads to secrecy. *The law is spiritual – lust in the heart is adultery; anger held onto in the heart is murder in God's eyes.
 - ii. Knowing the truth without changing leads to deception. British preacher of the 20th century, Martin Lloyd Jones applies this passage to Christians: "As you read your Bible day by day, do you apply the truth to yourself? What is your motive when you read the Bible? Is it just to have a knowledge of it so that you can show others how much you know, and argue with them, or are you applying the truth to yourselves? As you read, say to yourself, 'This is me! What is it saying about me?' Allow the Scripture to search you, otherwise it can be very dangerous. There is a sense in which the more you know of the Bible, the more dangerous it is to you, if you do not apply it to yourself.

iii. You can fool people now, but you will have to face God then. God looks at the heart people look at the outward. The heathen call the darkness, light, but God will one day judge them; the moralists have presumed to be light because of their performance, but God sees the heart. Circumcision and baptism and all Bible knowledge will mean nothing if the heart is not right with God. Both the Gentiles who only have the law of conscience, and the Jews who have the outward law as well as conscience will be held guilty before a holy God – all will be silenced before His judgment. Romans 3:19 NIV “Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God.”

II. Making God's enemies blaspheme.

- a. When Christians give mercy to themselves by making excuses, love justice for others (carrying a judgmental attitude), and walk in religious pride before God – we make those outside the church blaspheme God. We make Jesus look bad and undesirable – if that's what God is like, I don't want anything to do with Him. This is the opposite of Micah 6:8!
 - i. Do justly – make sure you're living in a right place and loving others.
 - ii. Love mercy – give others the benefit of the doubt – you are not their judge, God is. Sometimes it is the mercy of God that calls you to confront! *Faithful are the wounds of a friend – it is for their sake, not yours, so that you might “win your brother.”
 - iii. Walk humbly with your God – not trying harder to look like Jesus, yielding more so Jesus can live through us. *The life I live in this body I live by faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.
- b. David. 2Samuel 12:14 KJV “However, because by this deed you have given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also *who is* born to you shall surely die.” David how could you? I delivered you, I gave you a position, I gave you favor in every way and if it wasn't enough, all you had to do was ask! David reveals where the problem started in his prayer of repentance – Psalm 51:6a NASB “Behold, You desire truth in the ⁱⁿinnermost being...”
 - i. Maybe he started to feel entitled to all of God's blessings as if he earned them.
 - ii. Maybe he trusted past experience without keeping up a present relationship. “I know your deeds, you have a reputation of being alive but you're dead.”
 - iii. Maybe he felt everything was okay because he was still king and still winning on the battle field.

- iv. Maybe he felt his present unmet needs justified his behavior.
*Not for sex (he had plenty of attractive wives), but for fascination.
When we're no longer fascinated with God we're in danger!
- c. There have been many falls of leaders in the church – some very recent. Andrew came to me and said he was struggling; my daughter Anne asked me to address this publicly. One of the most recent was Sean Bolz – I experienced his anointing early on and it was powerful and pure. He moved in the word of knowledge and his prophetic ministry brought life and healing to many. He was in demand and the meetings got bigger and bigger – he began getting words from social media and pretending they were from God. He fell into sexual immorality while keeping the pretense of holiness and intimacy with God. Bethel leadership knew all this but didn't expose him to all the leaders who trusted them, so the damage was multiplied. *Deep repentance of Kris Valotin and Bill Johnson – a real credit to Bethel.
- d. Leaders who have fallen:
 - i. Spotlight – Catholic priests who were abusing boys and the leadership that moved them to other parishes instead of exposing them.
 - ii. Jim Bakker and Jimmy Swaggert.
 - iii. Ted Haggert and Bill Hybels.
 - iv. Paul Cain and Mike Bickle – broke my heart – I wrote a letter to the church because Mike was a hero in my eyes.
 - v. Ravi Zaccharias – didn't come out until after he died.
 - vi. Tony Evans and T.D. Jakes.
 - vii. Philip Yancy – are you kidding me?

III. How do leaders go astray?

- a. A lack of intimacy with God. You never see a leader fall; you only see them hit the bottom. They began to fall long ago when they stopped having intimacy with God. Matthew 7:22-23 “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many [Ⓜ]miracles?’ ²³And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; LEAVE ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’” Hitting bottom now is discipline, not final judgment.
 - i. David hit bottom but still fulfilled God's purpose in his generation.
 - ii. Peter hit bottom but went on to be a great apostle.
 - iii. We are not the final judge of any who have fallen – the problem with leaders is that they are people. We are not defined by the worst thing we've done, but we need to repent.
 - iv. When the weather is dangerous and you see people in the ditch, you slow down yourself. To think it could never happen to you is deception. *A double dream – the fear of the Lord is our defrost.

The next morning's reading was Nadab and Abihu: "I will be treated holy by those who draw near." Consequences are greater for leaders because of the influence they've been given.

- b. A sense of entitlement. (Matthew 24:45-51) The servant the master puts in charge is still a servant. But if he feels entitled by his position and begins to abuse those under his care and lives only for his own pleasures – the master will judge him most harshly. Great influence (success) or great suffering can lead to a feeling of entitlement – "I deserve this," "God understands." No, He doesn't.
- c. An addiction to influence or success.
 - i. The Torch and the Sword – "If you stay close to Me this torch will seem to be very light even though it isn't light or weak." *Sean loved the attention and the respect after the anointing was gone. Jesus warns us but especially the charismatic church – don't follow gifts if there's no fruit! Character is more important than gift! American Idol – I was part of those who idolized Paul Cain and Mike Bickle.
 - ii. We end up getting what we're aiming for. 1997 – half way through the fast. "I never want your public anointing to be greater than your private devotion." *God wants to do more and He's looking for people He can trust to keep their identity in their intimacy with Him.

Let's pray for leaders who have fallen, for leaders who are vulnerable right now, and for all leaders – may God find us faithful to Him even if we're not successful in the eyes of man.