

The Downward Spiral of Man—part 1

Lost—part 2

Romans 1:16-23

1. An overview of Romans:

- **Key verse:** *Romans 1:17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed through faith for faith; as it's written, He who through faith is righteous shall live.*
- **Key word:** Righteousness: (righteous, just, justify, justified)
- **Key question:** How can a holy God ever forgive sinners?

*Romans 3:26 ...He did it to demonstrate his **justice** at the present time, so as to be **just** and the one who **justifies** those who have faith in Jesus.*

DAY 1: The gospel in Romans

Romans 1:16 I am not ashamed of the gospel... it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile.

2. The operation of the gospel: (1:16b): it is the _____ of God.

- It takes God's power to convince every sinner to repent from sin. Our commitment to sin (to being the captain of our own soul, and the commitment to our own desires as primary) is so great that it takes the power of God to finally repent.

3. The outcome of the gospel (1:16c): _____.

- Salvation is the outcome of faith, no matter what we have done.

4. The outreach of the gospel (1:16d): to _____.

- The gospel is offered to everyone, through all time, in every nation, every language, every socio-economic group.

5. The key to receiving the gospel: those who have _____.

- We are not called to earn our salvation. Salvation is given to no one who thinks "my good will obey my bad."

6. What strikes you from Romans 1:16?

DAY 2: The downward spiral of intelligence (Romans 1:18-19)

Romans 1:18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and wickedness of men who by their wickedness suppress the truth.

1. Mankind love to proclaim itself as “free thinkers,” as “rational” beings, and as “open-minded” people.

2. What mankind will not see, nor admit, is that that is not true. What does Paul say people do when they hear the truth of God?

3. Why do people suppress the truth? What does Paul say is going on?

4. In the second letter to Timothy, Paul gives similar truth about human nature and our refusal to hear God’s truth.

2 Timothy 4:3 For the time will come when people will not put up with sound doctrine. Instead, to suit their own desires, they will gather around them a great number of teachers to say what their itching ears want to hear. ⁴ They will turn their ears away from the truth and turn aside to myths.

a. When these people listen to teachers, what is really going on?

b. Are they really open-minded?

c. No matter what is taught what do people want to hear?

Romans 1:19 For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.

5. What has God shown every person?

6. How does Paul describe the level of difficulty in understanding how God has revealed Himself?

7. What strikes you from today’s devotional?

DAY 3: The downward spiral of intelligence (Romans 1:20)

Romans 1:20 Ever since the creation of the world his invisible nature, namely, his eternal power and deity, has been clearly perceived in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse;

1. These verses have two themes about them.

2. Theme #1: Profound revelation.

a. What has God made known about Himself?

b. Is what can be known about God difficult to see or easy to see? What words does Paul use to describe the ease or difficulty it should be in seeing God?

c. If someone does not see God in nature, what is the source of the problem? Where does Paul specifically lay the blame?

3. Theme #2: Profound rejection.

a. What is mankind's response to the revelation of God?

b. What does it mean to "suppress" the truth?

4. If someone *wants* to see and understand who God is, should that be able to take place?

5. If it doesn't take place, what is the problem? Is it a knowledge problem or a heart problem?

6. What strikes you from today's devotional?

DAY 4: The downward spiral of ignorance (1:21)

Romans 1:21 ...for although they knew God they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking and their senseless minds were darkened.

1. What wrong responses does mankind make when presented with the opportunity to know God?
2. Why do you think man responds so poorly?
3. A rebellious and willful attitude to not respond to God has a devastating effect on man's thinking. What consequences does Paul identify?
4. Man makes an "exchange," trading the knowledge and value of God for what?
5. What effect do you think this has on man?
6. What words would you pick to identify the attitudes behind man's willful refusal to respond to the God who reveals Himself?
7. What words would you use to describe your attitude toward God?

DAY 5: The downward spiral of ignorance (Romans 1:22-23)

Romans 1:22 Claiming to be wise, they became fools,²³ and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man or birds or animals or reptiles.

1. Man loves to boast about his “free thinking,” his “open-mindedness,” and his love of wisdom. Secular man loves to claim that Christians are closed-minded. (One of the ironies of this is that it is Christians who have had to be open-minded enough to repent of their previous lifestyle!).

2. In spite of a claim to be wise, what is the effect of this downward spiral of intelligence and ignorance?

3. In previous verses we saw that mankind *suppresses* the truth. He closes his eardrums and refuses to consider any truth that doesn't fit what he wants to think or believe.

4. Here Paul says mankind does something else with the revelation of God's truth:

“...and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man...”

5. Rather than be thankful for all that God has give us, we turn away from the God who gives us everything and throw ourselves in full devotion and attention to created things. Two thousand years ago, men “worshipped” (ultimate allegiance) the “gods” of rain, springtime, harvest, fertility, sexuality, etc. They sought to manage their life without having to depend on God.

6. Today, ultimate allegiance is given to

Possessions: the “big,” impressive house, the right car, the right clothes, etc.

Experiences: the right vacations, the impressive adventures, the right restaurants, etc.

Feelings: adultery, pursuing the “forbidden fruit,” addiction, getting high, etc.

Significance: looking “sharp,” being successful, being impressive, etc.

Security: Having a big bank account and stock portfolio, etc.

Personal control: Being in “control,” having to have things done your way, “first me, then you,” etc.

7. This list could be endless!

8. Ironically, when we turn to creatures or creature comforts to find purpose, meaning in life, identity, significance, satisfying relationships, going away from God eventually does two things:

a. It takes us farther away from what we actually do want,

b. It makes us more desperate to find that missing “it.”

9. What strikes you from today's devotional?