

Is ignorance bliss?

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Date: 15 October 2023

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[0 : 00] Good morning. Like Andrew said, we're reading from Romans chapter 1 and we're reading the first 17 verses. Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle, set apart for the gospel of God, which he promised beforehand through his prophets in the holy scriptures, concerning his son, who was descended from David according to the flesh and was declared to be the son of God in power according to the spirit of holiness by his resurrection from the dead, Jesus Christ our Lord, through whom we have received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith for the sake of his name among all the nations, including you who are called to belong to Jesus Christ.

To all those in Rome who are loved by God and called to be saints, grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

First, I thank my God through Jesus Christ for all of you, because your faith is proclaimed in all the world. For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his son, that without ceasing I mention you always in my prayers, asking that somehow by God's will I may now at last succeed in coming to you.

For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to strengthen you, that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith, both yours and mine.

I do not want you to be unaware, brothers, that I have often intended to come to you, but thus far have been prevented, in order that I may reap some harvest among you, as well as among the rest of the Gentiles.

[1 : 53] I am under obligation both to Greeks and to barbarians, both to the wise and to the foolish. So I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome.

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek.

For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith. As it is written, the righteous shall live by faith. For Romans, we are back to Romans again.

What a great book. Today we are just recapping what we have talked about in the past, just quite a few months ago.

The reading from chapter 1 to 17 just reminds us of what Romans is about. And in the reading itself, there is already a summary of it.

[3 : 04] There is the gospel of God. There is Jesus Christ. There is grace. There is faith. And there is righteousness. So that is what we will be talking about today.

Before we start, let's pray first. Almighty God, we thank you again for your mercy that is more. That we can come before you, asking you to teach us what we need to know.

Show us how we should live. That we might honor you with our life. Thank you, Lord. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen. In my childhood, I lived in a large wooden house, which was built on a slope. So we didn't take any good photograph of the house, but that is part of it. And it's actually a hill behind it with a big jungle in there.

And there was a large rock, very big, like a caravan, just sitting right next to the roof that's on top of the hill.

[4 : 22] And there were many people living in the house. In the heyday, there were about 25 of us there. Besides my parents' family, there's relatives who didn't have a place to live.

So they lived with us for many years. Telling you that this house is built on the slope, on the hill, and in that part of the world where it ran quite a lot, especially towards the end of the year, you would, I hope you would know that there's a danger of landslide.

And landslides did happen quite frequently in my hometown, just not far away from us. There was a few years, no, one was a childhood.

There was one, a few houses was damaged by that landslide, and seven people died. But we didn't, as a child, I never realized, or didn't think about landslide, although we were quite happy living in the house, this big house, and there's a hill we can climb.

So we had a happy time, happy time there. And I also climbed up to that big rock and sat on top of it, not knowing about the danger.

[5 : 44] So the landslide did happen. That was about 12 years ago. That's 53 years after the house was built. And you could see that the house is basically gone in there.

Thankfully, by that time, most of us had moved away from the house to various places. There were still two of my older brothers there during that landslide.

It happened at about 4 a.m. in the morning, in the heavy rain. And miraculously, they only sustained mild injury. Not sure, they also didn't know how to escape.

They somehow walk out in the dark, in the rubble, avoid everything. But they're thankful that they escaped.

So, for me, ignorance was pleased as I had a great childhood living in the house. But if I knew that landslide could happen anytime, then it would be a very anxious time living in the house.

[6 : 53] Because my mom did tell me that she knew about ghost danger, and every time it rains, she would worry sick about this. And it's just, we're just thankful that we, it did not happen during our childhood days.

And, if it happened during our childhood days, then ignorance was not a bliss, obviously. And, so Romans 1 to 6 tells us ignorance is not bliss for two reasons.

One is that we are risking the danger of God's judgment. The other one is that we are missing the comfort of God's grace. So, when our days turn out as we have planned, and we enjoy our time, we do not think about God's judgment.

In fact, we do not even think about God at all. So, these are too dangerous. In Romans 1, it tells us that there is a God, and this God is angry towards man's ungodliness.

and unrighteousness. Ungodliness means that we lost the image of God. I mean, God created us in his image.

[8 : 15] And then we live in a way that nothing like God in our character. Unrighteousness means that we live in a way that we disregard God's rules. We just live whatever way we like.

The universe around us tells us that there is a God. Because we could see the creation and know that it has to be created by someone.

But we say that the universe tells us there is no God. That it comes by a big bang. The presence of morality in human society tells us that there is a God who decides what is who decides what is good and what is bad.

So, because we know that if something is good and something is bad there is that moral standard. And that they have to think who gives this moral standard.

And then we should consider that there is a God who would decide this. But the society will push for us to the freedom for each person to decide what is good and what is bad for himself and we think that when the outcome of our days seems good to us then this is God's blessing.

[9 : 34] But not knowing that this can be God's judgment as well. That's what chapter 1 says. Because people want to ignore God God's judgment is to let people do what they want.

So, there are three things that he mentioned there. that he let people worship whatever they want the creator beings. In doing so people gradually become more and more like what they worship. We become we will become like what we worship. So, if we worship idols we will like those idols of thoughts and our character we like those idols. And so, we lose our identity as the image bearer of God.

number two is that God let people pursue unnatural identities. We can now choose our own gender our sexual identities so that it feels good we can identify ourselves with anything we like.

So, in doing so we lose our identity as men and women. So, we lose our honor as God's creator beings. and number three God lets people satisfy the desires of their heart.

[10 : 54] We become preoccupied with getting what we want and in doing so we will compete with one another because when we want the same thing and everyone wants money or power then there is a struggle for in the world and there will be conflict between one another human beings and between countries and so that's what the world is like at the moment and also we make use of one another as instruments to get what we want and we also teach one another that it's good to have

greed and competition so that there is progress in the society.

So, in doing all these things we lose our souls we become dead in our souls so Romans 1 and 2 also tells us that ignorance is not an excuse we can't tell God that we didn't know there's no I didn't know we didn't know there's a God we didn't know there's your rules because the creator universe tells us that there is a creator and our own moral codes tells us there is a lawgiver and when we judge other people for doing the wrong thing we are affirming that there is such a thing as right and wrong we do not have any excuse because we cannot even live up to what we know is right and Romans 2 tells us that even people who know that there is a God and who know God's law are under

God's judgment because as we see the Jews they claim that they know God and they claim that they know God's laws but they could not live up to those what they know so it is more liability for those people for them to know God and know God's law but yet unable to live up to it so Romans 2 tells us that being religious does not help either we are still under the judgment of God so the first two chapters of Romans tells us that everyone in the world either it is religious or irreligious is living under the wrath of God the judgment that comes with God's wrath is not only a future event but it's also taking place right now as God let us do what is right in our own eyes so therefore ignorance of God's judgment is not pleased the other reason why ignorance is not pleased is that we cannot afford to ignore God's grace so we can ignore God's judgment we can you may also ignore God's grace grace during a recent trip to Nongpen in Cambodia I went through blood test results with most of the staff of Joy Christian School and I requested them to have their vitamin D levels checked so I received 86 results which I plotted on the graph so in Cambodia the minimum accepted level of vitamin D from blood test is 30 nanogram per mini litre which is the same as Australia which is 50 minimum per litre in Australian term but the ideal blood level of vitamin D is generally considered about 40 nanogram per litre which is if you can see the graph so on the y axis so there is 0 and then you've got 10, 20, 30, 40 so the mouse is pointing at the 40 level that is the ideal level or the good level of vitamin

D so we can see that move and then in the graph there are 24 male staff at the back of the graph the last 24 numbers are male and the front there are 62 are female so you can see that most of the male staff actually reach the minimum of 30 and many of them get to 40 but most of the females don't even get to 30 and only one got to 40 and so there is quite a vitamin D deficiency amount of the female staff because vitamin D deficiency does not cause any immediate and obvious symptoms most most people are happily ignorant of this deficiency in adults persistent vitamin D deficiency eventually causes osteoporosis and in infants it causes malformation of bones but vitamin D deficiency is also known to be associated with depression diabetes heart disease and some cancers and so we consider what causes this difference in vitamin

[16 : 40] D level between male and female staff I think it is mainly because female staff wear clothes with long sleeves and why do they wear long sleeves because the school is air conditioner and it's cold so they wear long sleeves the other thing is they don't want to get sun burn because their skins are already dark so they don't want to get their skin any darker so they cover their skin and unfortunately because their skins are darker they need actually more sunlight to get vitamin D unlike the Australian skin and so year after year doing that they don't have enough sunlight and so they become deficient in vitamin D and there is plenty of sunlight in Cambodia but many people are ignoring the need of sunlight to keep their bodies healthy I understand in

Australia we are afraid of too much sunlight because of different skin color that is one thing but still we all need some skin some sunlight on our skins also by the way you may worry that if you take too much sunlight your body may have overdose of vitamin D it doesn't happen because there's automatic shut off when the body sense that there's enough vitamin D it will not make any more and that's the amazing thing about God's creation so I advise them the female stuff to get about 20 minutes of sunlight on their arms that's all they need but they are still not willing to do that they would rather spend their money to buy vitamin D supplement but at least hopefully this will prevent many of them getting osteoporosis in their older age so in some ways

God's grace is like sunlight we're ignoring our need of this grace we think that we are doing just fine without any sunlight or that we can somehow earn God's grace by our own efforts what difference does God's grace make in our life how do we know that we live under God's grace and for this answer we'll jump to Romans 5 so there's Romans 5 the difference is that we will have joy we will rejoice people have God's grace love they will rejoice in hope in hope in Romans 5 they will rejoice

in the hope of the glory of God people who live under God's grace they know that they have sinned and lost any hope of being like God they have fallen short of the glory of God but now that they have been forgiven by God

God is restoring this glory and honor and immortality to them so because their hope is that God is restoring this glory and honor and immortality so they will not be discouraged by the failures or weaknesses or suffering they face each day this hope keeps them going and they also know that this hope is not dependent on what they do it is God given so this the second thing they rejoice in is suffering why do they rejoice in suffering?

because people who live under the grace of God they are not surprised by suffering they are actually surprised that they don't suffer because they know that they know two things one is that they are not perfect they know that they are silly they know that they are foolish and they know that life there will be lots of failures and suffering so this is one thing they are not surprised by their failure second thing also they know that their life is different to the life people live in this world and so they will not be able to mix well with people in this world and that in that way they will suffer that is grace that that changed their outlook and they also know that Jesus also suffered in this world and also they know that God is making them more like Jesus through suffering and so they rejoice in suffering the third thing is that they will rejoice in God because they start to understand

[21 : 37] God's love this love has been poured into the heart by the Holy Spirit and also through revelation in God's word and this love keeps them going and also they are no longer just rejoicing in their achievements they rejoice in God that means they rejoice in God's name being honoured they rejoice seeing God's kingdom come and God's will being done and this is that's what keeps them going and these are the people who live under the grace of God so most of us have joy deficiency but we are not aware of it and it is easy to check the level of joy in our hearts we can just think for a moment from the time we wake up this we woke up this morning until now how much our hearts has been occupied by worries sadness and disappointments and that happens to all of us every day we do not have much joy in our heart because we seek satisfaction in minor things we rejoice in our achievements and our plans being fulfilled in our entertainment because life does not usually turn up as it expects it to be and because even when our plans come true we are not satisfied and therefore there is little joy in our hearts people who are satisfied in God's grace and by God's grace can rejoice in major things so they rejoice in things which matter they rejoice in the hope of the glory of God they rejoice in suffering and they will rejoice in God and you know what once you can rejoice in major things you will start truly to rejoice in minor things

God has given to you to enjoy and that is what Ecclesiastes is talking about Solomon's writing that vanity everything is vanity he is talking about he couldn't enjoy everything in the world despite his wealth his power just because his satisfaction was in the things of the world and we can't find satisfaction in there and that is why he got disappointed with all that his experience but if we are satisfied in God's grace then we can truly be free to enjoy God's creation what God has given to us so for those who do not want to ignore God's grace or do not want to ignore God's grace Romans 5 and 6 tell us more about this grace so if we are joy division we need to know grace and we need to understand what grace is there's at least five things that

Romans 5 and 6 tell us he said grace is when we were weak and wicked Christ died for us grace is when we were dead Christ gave us life grace is when we were enslaved to sin Christ set us free grace is when we were lovers of sin Christ made us lovers of godliness grace is when we ought to receive the wages of sin Christ changed it into the gift of eternal life so Romans 1 and 2 tells us the danger we are facing if we ignore God's judgment Romans 5 and 6 the place we are missing if we ignore God's grace then we need to consider how does the person get to change from living under God's judgment to living under God's grace and that's why

Romans 3 comes in so Romans 3 first tells us that no one is acceptable in God's eye and by the works of the law no human being will be justified in God's sight for all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God we cannot contribute anything to change our status of living under God's judgment to the status of living under God's grace so we can ask the question can't God simply forgive sin to say it doesn't matter God's holiness is like light and our sin is like darkness holiness and sin just cannot come together without the light consuming the darkness so it's not a matter of if light will forgive the darkness darkness but light and darkness just don't mix there's one thing the other thing is that

God says that already the wages of sin is death and why will God save he can't change it or we can ask can't God just say let them be they will grow up someday and return to me so people will change and become a better person Romans 1 tells us that God does let us be but what will happen when God let us be when God let us do what is good in our own lives so we will grow up not to be a better person not to be a person who will be wanting to know God but we will grow up to be better sinners we will become more enslaved by darkness and we will not come to the light so Romans 3 goes on to tell us the gospel Paul said that he was not ashamed of the gospel why did he say that because the gospel is not we can do something to change our life but the gospel is [27 : 52] God has done something to change our lives the gospel is that the judgment of death has been received by Christ Jesus the blood of Christ has satisfied God's holy judgment God can now forgive sin because the debt has been paid God can now justify sinners without violating his own justice so will all the sinners be justified by God no only those who are in Christ Jesus can be justified now who are those in Christ Jesus they are the sinners who die in Christ and live in Christ they have died to their darkness and live in the light of Christ they can therefore return to God because they are covered by the light of Christ or they are consumed by the light of Christ so the rest of

Romans 3 tells us how someone can be in Christ it is both the easiest and the hardest things to be in Christ and the Bible calls it faith so Romans 4 tells us that from the very beginning faith has always been necessary for someone to be acceptable to God Abraham was justified because he believed in what God has promised and what he caused Abraham to do so Abraham had to leave his hometown had to go with God to unknown place and had to sort of sacrifice his son just because he believed in the word of God so believing in God does cause us something and that's why faith is the easiest and the hardest thing at the same time so easy because we just need to listen and believe hard because we need to die to ourselves so in accepting what God says we need to believe at least these five things

I'm not righteous I have not done anything good this first thing I'm living in darkness second thing is Jesus Christ is the only one who is righteous and the light third thing only the death of Jesus Christ can redeem me fourth thing Jesus Christ alone can be my savior and my lord and 15 once I'm in Christ it's no longer I who live but Christ lives in me even though we do not want to live under God's judgment and that we would like to live under God's grace we are too weak on our own to respond to the gospel by faith we do not want to give our own rights we are fearful to die to ourselves we thank God that he pulls us along helping us to take our first steps like a father helping his infant to walk the gospel comes to us from faith for faith

God starts our first steps after we have tasted the goodness of walking in grace we will have more confidence to walk on and on so today many of us have started this walk of faith we are thankful that God has been holding our hands we are thankful that we no longer live under the threat of landslides and we are thankful that God has not left us alone to do what seems right on us and we are thankful for the joy that is ours under God's grace and I hope that for those of us walking in this path of faith in God's grace we will keep walking as Jesus told his disciples that greater things you will do and I hope that we can all aspire to that to do greater things in Christ for the kingdom of God to do something that has eternal value for those of us who have not started this walk

I hope that you do want to live under the light of God's grace and if you want to do so you just need to ask God to help you otherwise we would keep on carrying our burden in life and at the end there will be judgment to come let us pray father we thank you for your mercy that we can now know that there's no condemnation to those who are in Christ not only that we also live in your grace that we can face this day with confidence with joy and with the ability to share the concern of others and be kind to others thank you

[33 : 46] Lord we also pray for those of us who are thinking and wanting to seek the truth may you help them to see the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ thank you Lord we pray in Jesus name amen I Lord I thank you