

Musing #42 — Romans 1:22-23

In our first session, we laid the foundation for Paul's letter to the Romans. We saw that God will judge with a righteous judgement. We saw God's view of the natural man—as he entered this world.

22 “professing themselves to be wise, they became fools....”

Jesus didn't need Freud & Skinner to know that man comes into this world with a fallen nature... apart from God. *"He (Jesus) knew what was in man."*

Our fallen nature led us in a... Search For Significance—a sure setup for failure. Many Christians today believe we go to the Bible to find out about God... but we go to a "professional" to find out about ourselves. Skinner believed there was no such thing as free will— all actions are the result of consequences from previous actions.

Can you see Paul going to a secular counselor...

“You know, I don't do the things I should... but I do things I shouldn't.” (Romans 7)

“Oh really, how long have you felt this way? Tell me about your potty training...

Ah...well, your dysfunctional family is clearly the cause.”

Jesus didn't analyze the woman at the well... He just told her the TRUTH. Error builds strongholds. Truth sets us free!

2 Corinthians 10:4-5 ...the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ...

The world professes to be wise, but they have become fools...

Romans 1:23 ...and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things.

In India... The *Times of India* noted, “In Hinduism, cows are regarded as sacred creatures and are symbolic of the nurturing qualities of the earth and tenderness. This respect for cows has its origin in both religious texts and cultural traditions.” Sadly, with millions of cows, many in their population endure hunger and starvation.

Here, and in the west, we worship things like homes and automobiles, honoring our cars with names of four footed animals like, Thunderbird, Firebird, Cougar, Mustang, Jaguar, Rabbit, Panther and Cobra. Nothing has changed in the world system.

Psalm 106:34-39 (MSG) They didn't wipe out those godless cultures as ordered by God; Instead they intermarried with the heathen, and in time became just like them. They worshiped their idols... sacrificed their sons and daughters at the altars of demon gods. They slit the throats of their babies, murdered their infant girls and boys. They offered their babies to Canaan's gods; the blood of their babies stained the land. Their way of life stunk to high heaven; they lived like whores.

Our society also worships the creature—The word worship means, reverence, admiration, devotion, honor. Is there any question that society, by and large, worships...

Athletes, Movie Stars, Politicians, TV Stars, Beauty pageants, Ambition, Greed, Sex, & Guns and more. Paul is really getting to the meat of things now...

God lets people have what they want. Clearly, when we remove societal restraints... everything comes out of the closet. Consider more closely the issues of Evil and Truth.

Q. What is evil? — The absence of good. God is fully good — therefore, evil is the absence of God, just as darkness is simply the absence of light.

The problem of evil has always been an issue for humanity, especially Christians.

Augustine (354-430 AD) and Thomas Aquinas (1225-1274)... centuries apart, laid the groundwork for a response to that question. Norman Geisler wrote the following...

Q. How do we fit an absolutely good God, with evil?

1. God is absolutely perfect.
2. God created only perfect creatures.
3. One of the perfections God gave some was the power of free choice.
4. Some of these creatures freely chose to do evil.
5. Therefore, a perfect creature caused evil.

So — God's "good creatures" with the good power of free will used this good power to bring evil into the universe by rebelling against their creator.

With freedom comes the possibility of evil. So God is responsible for making evil possible. But free creatures are responsible for making evil actual.

Q. Second question: Is it possible to destroy evil?

1. God cannot do what is actually impossible.
2. It is actually impossible to destroy evil without destroying free choice.
3. Free choice is necessary to a moral universe
4. So, God can't destroy evil without destroying the good moral universe.

Even an omnipotent being cannot do anything. It can only do what is possible. But it is not possible to force people to freely choose the good. Forced freedom is a contradiction. Therefore, God cannot literally destroy all evil without annihilating free choice. Unless hate is possible, love is not possible.

Conclusion:

1. God is all good and desires to defeat evil.
2. God is all powerful and is able to defeat evil.
3. Evil is not yet defeated.
4. Therefore, it will one day be defeated.

Another issue for discussion... What is truth?

It has been said... Truth is what God says and Faith is acting like God tells the truth.

2 Timothy 4:3-4 For a time is coming when people will no longer listen to right teaching. They will follow their own desires and will look for teachers who will tell

them whatever they want to hear. They will reject the truth and follow strange myths.

Paul challenged the Galatians.....

Galatians 5:7 You did run well; who did hinder you that you should not obey the truth?

Words convey truth. We are at a time in our country when truth is only accepted as “relative” to circumstances. We have become a culture of shifting sand.

Here's an example: If I lay down my pencil on the right side of a folder and say... “the pencil is on the right side of the folder” — The relativist says my statement is relative, depending upon which side of the folder I'm standing... and to him who faces me, the pencil is on the left side of the folder.

What is the relativist missing? In absolute truth, both must be willing to always put the statement in the context of who says it. By taking the person who made the statement out of the equation, truth becomes relative... to any view.

This is precisely what the world has done with God's Word. They have taken God out of society... reduced His sovereignty and with that the Bible—God's Word... is relative to their perspective. Why?

- Truth puts a limit on things
- Truth creates discomfort
- Truth establishes an absolute authority....
- Truth puts people in jail
- Truth stirs controversy, sometimes divorce
- Truth upsets relationships
- Truth gets God's only Son crucified.

This is why the world is so against Christian beliefs and why the religious right is considered “extreme” in their view.

We're extreme because we believe the Bible is God's Word.

And we believe Jesus Christ, was God incarnate Son who came to earth to give his life for our sins so God could give us new “eternal” life.

If Jesus Christ.....IS all He said He was... If the Bible IS the inerrant Word of God... then people must change their thinking, and their ways, to find true peace.

It is similar with the word “tolerance.” Evangelical Christians are considered “intolerant.”

G. K. Chesterton is quoted as saying: “....tolerance is the virtue of those who don't believe in anything.”

At the core of tolerance is a kind of intolerance. If truth is merely someone's opinion, then goodness becomes only what the majority says it is.

Philosophers have argued for centuries over "What is Truth!" The reason they can't decided is because they don't like the only answer, especially if it is based on **Who Said It!!!**

Jesus said...."I am the way, **the truth** & the life." He embodied what God had been saying through the prophets.

Pilate... in confronting Jesus, questioned **truth**....

John 18:36-38 Jesus answered Pilate, "I am not an earthly king. If I were, my followers would have fought when I was arrested by the Jewish leaders. But my Kingdom is not of this world." Pilate replied, "You are a king then?" "You say that I am a king, and you are right," Jesus said. "I was born for that purpose. And I came to bring truth to the world. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true." Pilate asked "What is truth?"

Pilate's implication was... There is no such thing...as **absolute** truth...(sound familiar?) Because from Pilate's perspective... the context of "who said it"....had no meaning in his life.

We, as believers, are reminded of the power of truth in Paul's letter to the Thessalonians..

2 Thessalonians 2:13from the beginning God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth.

Not relative truth — But what God clearly said.

Isaiah 59:15 Truth was nowhere to be found, and he that shunned evil became a prey. The LORD looked and it displeased Him that there was no judgement.

For the Christian a relativist view is not an option.

John 17:17 Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth... (What God says).

Yet, most Christians struggle with "trust & obey."

We have an entire nation... that turns with the winds of the latest polls.

There is a Biblical example of polling, you know....

While Moses was on the mountain... getting God's law, Aaron was taking a poll of the people. They ended up worshipping a golden calf.

There is a difference between knowledge and wisdom!!!

Our Holy Bible is the foundation of all truth. Believe it!