

A SERIES OF DEVOTIONS BASED ON PAUL'S LETTER TO THE CHURCH IN ROME

THE DOWNHILL MARCH TOWARD THE END

Romans 1:28-32 “ Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.”

Humanity has tested what God has revealed to them through both natural and revealed knowledge of Him. In this way the population of this earth has observed God's power and divinity. Through this knowledge God intended to drive them to worship, serve and glorify Him. Instead, they have rejected His divinity, word and will. They have exchanged Him and His promised blessings for idols, worship of created things, and engaged in abhorrent personal behavior. They have endured the negative effects of their wickedness, “evil, greed and depravity.” (Romans 1:29)

Note the sins listed in Romans 1:28-32 are those committed internally such as envy, having a depraved mind, and having hearts filled with malice and deceit. Their sins are also committed outside of their minds and bodies such as murder and strife. They invent all kinds of evil. For the last two thousand years human beings have continued on a downhill spiritual course ignoring, disobeying, and rejecting God. They have traded` down from His offered righteousness and blessings for Satan's offering of eternal punishment and death.

Luther says man has “curved in on himself.” Sinful human beings are filled with hubris, that is excessive pride and self-confidence. They no longer have a need for God as either creator or preserver of His creation. They want to go-it-alone, do their own thing, attempt to create a world that feels good, plays to sinful passions, and elevates humans to being greater than God. In verse 31 Paul wants the readers of his letter to know that humanity is heading toward impending doom.

These verses are all law. Their purpose is to drive you the reader who has been tugged onto this spiritual downhill course to recognize it leads only to more sin, brings such a life course to a halt, turn you from this futile way of living, and turn you back to Him who has created you. He desires to be your God, and through His Son Jesus bring you back to Him as your heavenly Father. Paul, through these words takes the focus off of people and back to where it properly belongs. The focus is upon God!

Prayer: Help me Lord to recognize when I am on the slippery downhill course that leads to rejection of you and the ensuing despair and hopeless future this lifestyle offers. Send Your Spirit to open the eyes of my heart and the doors of my heart that You alone are God, Your word is truth, You love me in Christ and through Him have prepared my eternal home with You. In Jesus' name. Amen.

Herald, sound the note of judgment, Warning us of right and wrong,
Turning us from sin and sadness Till once more we sing the song. Refrain:
Sound the Trumpet! Tell the message: Christ, the savior King, is come!

Herald, sound the note of gladness; Tell the news that Christ is here;
Make a pathway through the desert For the one who brings God near.
Refrain:

Herald, sound the note of pardon— Those repenting are forgiv'n;
God receives His wayward children, And to them new life is giv'n.
Refrain:

Herald, sound the note of triumph; Christ has come to share our life,
Bringing God's own love and power, Granting vict'ry in our strife.
Refrain:
(LSB 511)