

ROAMING THROUGH ROMANS

“The Rightness of God’s Wrath-Part 3”

Romans 1:24-32

Open your Bibles to Romans Chapter One. We are going to finish the chapter at this time. Let’s read our text and then we’ll look at it line upon line and precept upon precept. Romans 1:24-32. Paul writes:

²⁴Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

²⁸And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; ²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, ³⁰backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; ³²who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

For the past couple of sessions we have been looking at what I call “The Rightness of God’s Wrath.”

Is God right when He pours out His judgment on mankind?

And what we found out is that He is, because He has given man more than enough information to know Him. He has revealed both His righteousness and His wrath to man. He has made it abundantly clear who He is, both through the creation, and because He has placed knowledge of Him in their hearts.

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But for the most part, man has rejected this revelation God has given him. He has chosen not to honor Him as God and give Him the glory He deserves. Man has also chosen not to be thankful for all the blessings God has bestowed on him. This has caused him to become foolish in his thoughts and darkened in his heart.

Because of this, the desire to worship that God has placed in the hearts of men has been filled with all kinds of idols and foolish things. Professing to be wise, man has become the fool who has said in his heart, “There is no God.”

As we talked about last time, man has *devolved* and not *evolved* as he believes.

And nowhere in Scripture is this made more evident than in the verses we are going to study now. These nine verses are some of the most fearful that we will read in the Bible. Donald Grey Barnhouse put it this way:

The last nine verses in the first chapter of Romans are the most terrible in the Bible...The scene is frightful.

Listen to how John MacArthur describes this passage in his commentary on Romans:

As Paul illustrates in these verses, and develops theologically through the end of chapter 4, man is not basically good but evil. His nature is innately bent toward sin. “There is none righteous, not even one; ... there is none who does good, there is not even one.... all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God.”

The prophet Jeremiah tells us that the heart of man is deceitfully wicked above all else. And Paul seems to confirm this with what he writes here in his letter to the Romans.

These verses speak of a moment when a nation, or man, has reached the point where God’s wrath is poured out on them.

Did you read ahead and look for the three places where Paul says that “**God gave them over**”?

This should make us shudder. And yet, for many, it doesn’t even make them blink. Such is the plight of prideful man. He, or she, is lost in their sin and in desperate need of a Savior. Look how far man has fallen as we begin our study (verse 24):

Therefore God also gave them up

The word “**therefore**” points us back to what Paul has already taught us. And then it also introduces us to what is coming next.

Because God has revealed His wrath against sin and because man has rejected this revelation, something has to happen.

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Man suppresses the truth of God's divine power and deity and refuses to glorify Him.

So God gives man over. He gives them what they desire. As Dr. Harry Ironside once said:

Because men gave God up, He gave them up.

The verb “**gave over**” definitely speaks of a judicial abandonment. It was used of a person who had the authority to commit or deliver someone to prison.

So it is more than God just allowing someone to have their own way. It means that He actively withdraws His restraint, His protection and His grace, and pronounces judgment. In other words, God allows them to experience the self-destructive result of their sin. Listen to what the Lord said through the prophet Hosea about this aspect of His judgment (Hosea 4:17):

**Ephraim is joined to idols,
Let him alone.**

I don't know about you, but I never want God to say this about me.

Before we move away from this thought that God gives someone over, we need to talk about something very difficult.

What Paul is saying here is that at some point in time, God takes charge of the action and decrees condemnation on a nation or person. Just exactly when this occurs is God's business. But we know it is true because of what happened with Pharaoh when he wouldn't let Israel go from Egypt. The first few times it says that Pharaoh hardened his heart.

But then what happened the last time?

It says that God hardened Pharaoh's heart (three times in Exodus 10 and 11). And the result was God passing judgment by eliminating all of the firstborn of Egypt.

We also know that He gives over nations. He even sent His own people Israel into dispersion throughout the world, not once, but twice. He has also judged nations that persecuted His people, even to the point that they no longer exist.

Do you know a Babylonian or Assyrian?

Or how about an Edomite, Ammonite, Philistine or Amorite?

God passed His judicial judgment on these nations and so, just like He said, they are no more.

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There is a false concept in theology which says that a person can choose to believe on Christ anytime he or she wants. This is absolutely not true.

Scripture clearly says that it is God the Father who draws someone near (John 6:44). And it is the Holy Spirit who does this work by convicting people of their sin and convincing them of their need for a Savior (John 16:7-11).

Not only that, it is possible for a person to reach the point where they cannot respond any longer. That is what happened to Pharaoh. He reached a point of no return. And a believer can reach this point as well as a non-believer. It is called the sin unto death. We will learn more about this in Romans Chapter 6.

What we need to focus on for now is that God allows men to wallow in the muck of their sin. Sometimes He chooses to pluck them up. And other times, He does not.

Let's read verse 24 from the beginning for context, and then we'll look at what God gives man over to:

Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves

We talked about this last time.

Over a period of time, people begin to resemble what they worship. The ancients worshipped animals and creeping things, so they began behaving like them. And the truth is, because we have taught our children that they are just another animal, they act like animals. Sandy Adams, Calvary Chapel pastor, put it like this:

Teach a child that he is nothing but an animal and he'll be a party animal. Why expect a kid to develop spiritual appetites and moral standards if all he consists of is glands and hands? In today's morally relativistic world we haven't given people a reason why one human whim is any more right than another. People today are driven by their lusts. They dishonor their bodies. They've lost any concept of the sanctity of human sexuality. They've been given over to uncleanness.

This is true of all time; but as we will talk about in a moment, it has really ramped up in our time. But it was very true in Paul's time as well. Look how far the people then were from the Lord (verse 25):

who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

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In every rebellion against God, we exchange the truth of God for the lie. Not a lie, but “*the lie*.” And that lie comes from the beginning, in the Garden of Eden.

Anybody know what the first lie was?

Satan asked Eve, “**Has God really said?**”

Now this was a half-truth. But a half-truth, Pastor Tom in Reno always said, is a whole lie.

The truth is that God really did say “**don’t eat of the forbidden fruit.**”

And He said so because he knew how destructive it would be for man to have the knowledge of good and evil. God knew that if man had this knowledge, it would cause him to question His truth and believe the lie. And this would lead to idolatry.

Satan just threw in the word *really* to sow doubt. And it worked.

The specific truth of God that Paul seems to be speaking of here is the sanctity of marriage. In other words, “Did God really say go forth and multiply?”

This was God’s first command to man. And the enemy has attacked this command ever since God gave it. Genesis 2:24-25 gives us God’s plan for how man was to build His kingdom:

²⁴Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

²⁵And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Monogamous, heterosexual marriage was God’s purpose and wisdom for His imagers.

So it is no surprise that, once they rejected His right to rule over them, this plan would get perverted. And it has.

Notice that Moses said the woman and man were naked and not ashamed. A sexual relationship within God’s plan is one of the most beautiful things about life. He literally uses this wonderful act to breathe life into a new being (not fetus—human being). But not only that.

He also uses it to strengthen the relationship between a man and woman. They leave their families and cleave to one another. They become one, not just with each other, but with God as well. This is kind of like gluing two boards together.

Do you know what happens when you do this?

It becomes kind of like a super board, much stronger than the original.

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But what happens when you split them apart?

They splinter and leave parts of each board embedded in the other. This is what happens when the man leaves his wife. It is also what happens when we have relations outside of marriage. We mix our chemistry with the other person. And when we do this over and over, it becomes toxic.

That is not God's way.

This is:

The Bible says that a man is supposed to love his wife as Christ loves the church. The wife is supposed to submit to the husband as the spiritual head of the home. And the family, as well as all of us, are supposed to submit to one another in love.

That is God's plan.

Now, because of the discussion of homosexuality that follows, we tend to overlook something.

Verse 25 speaks of the perversion of a heterosexual relationship. Fornication between unmarried men and women, as well as adultery by those who are married, is just as sinful as what follows.

God's design for man is for him to have one wife and build one family.

One man.

One woman.

One family.

One God.

But very few people have adhered to this precept. In fact, we live in a world where any and every thing goes. And the fact that these relationships are so commonly accepted in society so as to not shock us does not change their perverse nature. So look how man, inspired by the unholy trinity of the world, the flesh and the enemy have twisted this wonderful thing God designed (verses 26-27):

²⁶For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

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Here we have the second mention of God giving men up. This time they are given over to vile passions. The word *vile* is graphic. Listen to how Strong's defines it:

in a state of disgrace, used of the unseemliness and offensiveness of a dead body

Another interesting point is that Paul did not use the normal word for men and women. David Guzik explains it like this:

Paul doesn't even use the normal words for man and woman here; he uses the words for male and female, using categories that describe sexuality outside of human terms, because the type of sexual sin he describes is outside of human dignity.

Homosexuality is an affront to God because it is against the natural design He made for men and women. I hope we all understand this. It is not natural but "against nature."

Did you know that upwards of 40 percent of our young people "identify" as homosexual or some other vile thing?

What will happen in 100 years (*if the Lord tarries*) if this continues or even, God forbid, accelerates (as the enemy would like)?

Mankind would be greatly diminished.

Why?

Because they CANNOT become one in this kind of relationship.

And, no, men cannot have babies; and women adopting children is not the same thing. Of course, modern man is trying to thwart God's plan using genetics. But that is a discussion for another time.

For our purposes at this time, we just need to know that God sees this kind of relationship as a reason to give someone over. He will, and has, poured out His wrath on this behavior. Paul says that men receive in themselves "***the penalty of their error which was due.***" I see this as a description of sexually transmitted diseases and viruses, such as AIDS. (And I'm glad that we just stream this on a Facebook group; because if it was a podcast, I would have just got banned.)

Now here is the truth about these kinds of relationships:

People in our time would have us believe that we are just uninformed because of ancient beliefs.

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But Paul wrote this letter from Corinth, which was a cesspool of depravity. And he wrote it to the churches in Rome where homosexuality was accepted as a part of life for both men and women. Listen to what Gene Pensiero says about Paul's time:

For some 200 years men who openly practiced homosexuality, often with young boys, ruled the Roman Empire. At times the Roman Empire specifically taxed homosexual prostitution and gave boy prostitutes a holiday. Legal marriage between same gender couples was recognized, and even some emperors married other men.

Solomon said that there is “**nothing new under the sun.**” This has been going on since Sodom and Gomorrah and before (maybe even Noah and his son, Ham). And it has always been an affront to God.

So we, as Christians, need to call it what it is — *SIN*.

And we must speak out against it just as we do any other lie from the pit of hell. It brings judgment on people and turns them far away from God. To say anything less is exactly what Paul meant when he wrote “**professing to be wise they became fools.**” Accepting these behaviors, as our society and even the church has done, is not something to be proud of. It is something to be ashamed of because we have become fools.

But the big question is...

Did Paul single out sexual sin because it is the worst sin?

I don't think so. I think it is because it was an affront to God's first command.

To go forth and multiply outside of marriage, or to engage in a make-believe marriage, is against His original intent. And this has caused major issues in our country and our world. Here are some statistics to back this up. Speaking of children living in one-parent homes, they are:

*7 times more likely to live in poverty. 6 times more likely to commit suicide
50% more likely to commit a crime. 52% more likely to become pregnant
out of wedlock. 60% of America's rapists grew up without a father. 63% of
youth suicides are happening among fatherless children. 70% of school
delinquencies are from fatherless homes. 71% of teenage pregnancies are
from fatherless homes. 72% of high school dropouts are from fatherless
homes. 73% of youth on youth murders are from fatherless homes. 86% of
the youth prison population grew up without a male role model. 87% of
youth behavioral disorders come from fatherless homes. 90% of America's
runaways are from fatherless homes.*

(Source: www.fathersforlife.org/divorce/children)

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All of this is a result of people thumbing their noses at God's plan. If you don't believe me on this, listen to what Paul wrote next (verse 28):

And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;

By rejecting God, men have perverted both their wedlock and their worship.

Because men don't want to retain God in their knowledge, He gives them over to a debased mind. When He does this, all bets are off. And man gets what he deserves — the wrath of God. Look at the results the wrath of abandonment has caused men to experience (verses 29-31):

²⁹being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, ³⁰backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful;

Let's take a quick look through this list.

First, **“sexual immorality.”** This is the Greek word *pornea*. What word do you think we get from this? Pornography. It applies to all forms of illicit sexual arousal and activity. In our time, with the invention of the internet, pornography is rampant, even in the church. And the worst part of it is that it includes children.

Second, **“wickedness.”** This word means to work or toil at being wicked.

Third, **“covetousness”** This is greed or the itch for more as we talked about last time.

Fourth, **“maliciousness.”** This is the desire to injure another person.

Fifth, **“strife.”** This is the tendency to argue just for the sake of arguing. I do this sometimes, so pray for me.

Sixth, **“backbiters.”** This is slander and talking behind the back of others. Early church father Crysostom said that “slander is worse than cannibalism.” We need to tame our tongues.

Seventh, **“inventors of evil things.”** O my, does this speak to our time? Please do your homework and find out what kinds of things evil people are doing in the name of “science.”

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Eighth, “**disobedient to parents.**” This has become epidemic in our world. I have one comment, and it is Biblical. *Spare the rod, spoil the child.*

Ninth, “**undiscerning.**” This speaks of an unteachable heart. Many in our time have failed to learn from history. How else could a large portion of our country fall for the lies of socialism? Just asking.

Tenth, “**untrustworthy.**” Do we really trust one another anymore? No. And the enemy uses this distrust to sow dissension. This is the result.

Next in the list are “unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful.” In Mathew 24:12 Jesus said this about the last days:

And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold.

One historian wrote this about Rome (from Sandy Adams’ notes):

How pitiless she was! Amid all the ruins of her cities we find no hospital or orphanage—in an age that made many orphans. Rome had no conscience; she was a lustful, devouring beast, made more bestial by her intelligence and splendor.

And Rome fell — hard.

Have you ever heard of a book called “The Rise and fall of the Roman Empire”?

I have never read through the whole thing but have read clips from it. It was ugly what they became. And it seems to be almost exactly what Paul wrote here in Romans that brought them down.

I don’t think modern society is any prettier, do you?

You could take anything listed here and look up statistics that would show our society is increasing in all these things. And there is no end in sight. The Bible says that in the last days, lawlessness will abound. We live in that lawless society. Just watch the news. But God has one final indictment.

And this one should cause us all to pause. Look at verse 32:

who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Here is something else that all men of all time are said to “know.” They know that these behaviors are deserving of punishment by the God Who is revealed to them in creation. Otherwise, we would not have laws.

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Am I right?

Nevertheless, they not only do the same kinds of things, they also approve of those who practice them. We not only approve of this in our time, we pass laws legalizing, or at least condoning, such sin. Especially the sexual sins.

Doesn't no-fault divorce give tacit approval to adultery?

Biblically, if you divorce and remarry, what is it that you have committed?

Adultery.

And we don't even need to go there to know that same-sex marriage is just wrong.

"But you cannot legislate morality," so the world says. I think this is a copout. We need to have Godly people making our laws; otherwise, we will be lawless. And we are pretty far along into the perversions listed here. But here is the part that scares me:

Is Paul saying that if we approve of these things, we are "**deserving of death**"?

I think he does.

What is the opposite of approving?

Disapproving.

Is the church of Jesus Christ doing a good job of this?

No.

In many cases we have become just like the world. And I'm not only talking about the same sex, homosexual pastor stuff. Some churches, *actually a lot of them*, are heavily into the social justice garbage we see in our time. That is, they approve of the BLM (Black Lives Matter), Antifa stuff. They think it is a good idea to teach CRT (Critical Race Theory) to our kids. Some of their leaders and people are even socialists, even though socialism at its roots is anti-Christ. And this breeds the bottom line truth we just read.

Lawlessness is abounding, and many Christians are either just sitting this out or agreeing with it.

Maybe we need to get involved — what do you think?

So, what do we do?

Listen to Matthew 24:12 again, and I have added verse 13:

¹²And because lawlessness will abound, the love of many will grow cold. ¹³But he who endures to the end shall be saved.

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When loves grows cold, should we just step away?

I don't think so. I think we need to love more. We need to share the truth of the Gospel even though it might not — or will not — make us popular. And this might hurt. But it is worth it.

Not only will we endure to the end, but we might help some others to be there as well. Listen to what Paul wrote to the Corinthians right after he gave them a very similar list of sins that we just read (1 Corinthians 6:11):

And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

This is good news, amen! We can help people get washed. Isn't that amazing!

Keep this verse in mind as you read ahead to chapter two. It will keep you humble.

Let's pray.