

sermon study guide

Sermon Summary (see next page for discussion questions)

“Romans” Part 3: When God Lets Us Have Our Own Way

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Why is God’s wrath being revealed? God continues to reveal Himself to everyone through His creation and our conscience – every person knows there is a God. Yet because people want to live as they wish they suppress the truth of God, replacing Him with an idol of their making. This leads to spiraling into greater levels of wickedness through ever more foolish thinking. The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15) exemplifies this. The son wants out. The father lets him go knowing that grief will follow.

God does the same thing (Romans 1:24-32). As people continue to live wicked lives and suppress the truth of God with idols, God reveals His wrath by lifting His hand of grace and protection. He then gives them over by letting people have their own way and live with the consequences of their choices to ultimately draw them to Himself. This may happen to a believer, unbeliever or even culture/people group.

God gives them over to:

1. Sexual impurity (vs 24). In the Christian worldview anything that deviates from God’s moral context for sex (Gen 2:24, Matt 19:5, Eph 5:3, 1 Cor 6:13) is impure. It is people choosing to do sexually what they wish apart from God (Rom 1:24-27). Inevitably in any culture that exchanges God for an idol there is a clash of worldviews. In this world we are all sexually broken people and are tempted to act out our sexuality in inappropriate ways.
2. Shameful lusts (vs 26). Here, Paul speaks specifically about male/female homosexual behavior which goes against God’s design (Gen 1:27-28). He is not speaking of merely same-sex attraction. Christians have not always demonstrated Christlike love and compassion toward the homosexual community but often judged or condemned them, not understanding the difference between acceptance and agreement. Christians choose to worship their Creator rather than His creation, entrusting their lives to Jesus Christ and living out their faith as the Scriptures say with the help of the Holy Spirit, believing that the intimacy that we truly need and crave is only found in God. Thus, there will be times when Christians will disagree with certain lifestyles, yet it doesn’t make them bigots or homophobic, subjects to be demonized or cancelled. Still, any conversation must be had with love and respect.
3. A depraved mind (vs 28-32). Ultimately we push God away because the only thing that matters is ‘me’ and that ‘my’ needs and wants are met. While there might be a tendency to fixate on homosexual behavior in this passage, Paul lists 21 other sins that are the result of our seeking our own way apart from God (Rom 1:28-32). We are all in that list of sins and are all guilty. Yet our identity is in Christ (1 Cor 6:11), adopted by Him. The core of a Christian’s personhood is in Him. And the church is made up of the same kind of people who can then be open and transparent about the stuff in their lives and not explaining away sin or being judgmental. Let us not worship counterfeit idols or give ourselves to lesser things lest our lives be characterized by the many sins Paul lists in this passage. We are created for so much more! In whom or in what is your trust?

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Discussion Questions

IN - PURSUE RELATIONSHIP

1. When you get something new or are trying to fix something, do you follow the written directions or do you just try to figure it out on your own? Why?

UP - PURSUE GOD

Read Romans 1:18-32

2. Pastor Henry talked about the parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32) and how the father “gave over” the son. In Romans chapter 1 what are the three ways that God “gives people over” who insist on going their own way (v.24, 26, 28)? How would you summarize each one? How does each one lead to the next?
3. We can get fixated on the part of this Scripture that talks about sexual sin and thereby miss the 21 sins Paul lays out in verses 28-31. How might these sins be forms of idolatry? Which one of these was notable in your life before coming to Jesus and how has He transformed you?

OUT - PURSUE MISSION

Read Ephesians 5:1-10

4. Discuss how you might explain to someone who is not a Christ-follower what is the Christian perspective on sexuality? Why do you believe that?
5. Pastor Henry said that we should be “a church that creates a safe place for all those who are genuinely seeking spiritual answers”. What is the difference between acceptance and agreement? How can we show respect for those with different worldviews? How can we best represent Christ to them?

Personal Reflection:

Devotionally read Rom. 1:18-32 asking God to show you if there is any area where you are worshipping the creation rather than the creator – whether you are trusting God or the temporary things of this world. Ask Him what you should then do with this?

Romans 1:18-32 NIV

God’s Wrath Against Sinful Humanity

¹⁸The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness, ¹⁹since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that people are without excuse.

²¹For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²²Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles.

²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵They exchanged the truth about God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

²⁶Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error.

²⁸Furthermore, 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. ²⁹They 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, ³⁰slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they disobey their parents; ³¹they have no understanding, no fidelity, no love, no mercy. ³²Although 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.