

Romans #2
The World On Trial Before God
Romans 1:18-2:3

In our last study of this epistle, we looked at Paul's introduction to the Romans. Tonight, we are going to look at the next section in this epistle, as Paul waste not time getting right to the point of presenting the bare facts of the sinfulness of humanity.

Look with me as we study verses 18-32, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown it to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, because, although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man - and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise 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. 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; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; 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.”

In the part of Romans that we are now approaching, the Apostle Paul seems almost like some great lawyer in a court of justice, as he brings charges against the society of that day. And, strangely enough, those charges read like the headlines of our present day.

Look with me as we present the charges in this indictment against the people of yesteryear and today:

Look at what they were charged with: (1) The first charge is that of idolatry because they were guilty of “worship(ing) and serving(ing) the creature more than the Creator.” (2) The next charge was that of changing “the truth of God for a lie.” In other words, instead of believing what they knew was the truth about God, they deliberately chose to believe a lie. (3) The final charge was the fact that they “did not like to retain God in their knowledge.”

The result of that kind of thinking is that absolutes are abolished and every person embraces what is right in their own eyes and there is no sense of offense against holy God. Therefore, truth is suppressed and unrighteousness flourishes in our lifestyles. **Why? Because where there is no spiritual dominance, only flesh dominance, sin is always out of control.**

In fact, the more prevalent bad behavior becomes the more accepted it becomes. We are very adaptable people even in the face of behavior we once abhorred. **Soon what was once abhorred becomes first tolerated and then embraced.** **In other words, what we once believed to be sin because God said it now becomes accepted because men now live it.**

And here in the very first chapter of Romans Paul deals with a most difficult subject to make his point – that of homosexuality. Therefore, look with me as verses 26-27, “For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise 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.” From this passage of Scripture, it is obvious that this was not a new subject, but one that was brought to the forefront by the lifestyles mentioned in verses 21-23. **In fact, this is an issue that is as old as the book of Leviticus 18:22,** “You shall not lie with a male as with a woman. It is an abomination.”

You will remember that I said earlier that that which was once abhorred becomes first tolerated and then embraced? But, does society give us any evidence that that statement is true? **Look at the results:**

We have seen the legalization of same-sex marriages; the decriminalization of sodomy by the Supreme Court; the announcement of new anti-discrimination rules for same-sex workers at Wal-Mart; gay couples are being granted the privileges of married partners when it comes to insurance; and now an openly, practicing, homosexual bishop being elected in the Episcopal Church by a 62-43 vote.

Before I go any further, let me remind you that God hates the sin of drunkenness, but he loves the person in bondage to alcohol. He hates the sin

of *adultery*, but He loves the person who has fallen into the trap of lust out of control. God hates the sin of *gossiping*, but He loves the person whose tongue is out of control. In like manner, God hates the sin of *homosexuality*, but He loves the person who is in the bondage of homosexual behavior.

What am I saying to you tonight? Simply this: all of us need to remind ourselves that we too are capable of all manner of sin, and but for the grace of God, we would be in the same manner of bondage! Therefore, it must be out of hearts of love that we offer hope, not guilt, to those who are struggling in some area of sin and bondage.

When the Bible uses the term “leaving the natural use” it is clear that God views homosexuality as a diversion from the original biological purpose of human sexuality. If sexual behavior between homosexuals is unnatural and wrong, why do people have those desires to be with others of the same sex? In spite of published reports in such publications as “The Gay Blade” and “Act Up,” there is not one ounce of scientific research that has shown that homosexuality is genetic, and the Bible does not shed any further light on the origins of homosexuality.

Although there is no clearly identified single cause of homosexuality, in all of the research that I have done and read, one cause is deep pain stemming from a dysfunctional family environment. This pain often results in a lack of self-esteem, anger, guilt, unforgiveness, depression and shame. There are several family traits that are common to many homosexuals’ upbringing. **Alienation, for example, seems to be the hallmark of homosexual’s early family life.** Usually alienation takes shape through one of several family patterns.

1. Parent-child relationships. Psychoanalytic theories have maintained that homosexuality come to males raised in families where there is a weak, passive, ineffective father and/or a domineering mother. This mother subtly teaches her son to be passive and dedicated to her. **He has no strong male example to follow and soon discovers that he is less competent than his peers in relating to girls.** The son, therefore, loses confidence in his masculinity and dreads the thought of intimacy with women. Daughters in such families perceive their father as being unfriendly or rejecting so the girls have little opportunity to relate to really masculine men. They relate better to women.

2. The father is absent, distant or abusive. A weak father-child relationship is another common trait in most homosexual upbringing. They frequently comment that they never felt their father’s approval. **More bluntly, some male homosexuals describe their homosexual affairs as blatant attempts to obtain affection they never received from their fathers.** A female with an

abusive father, on the other hand, may seek a female relationship out of fear that all males will ultimately be abusive.

3. Childhood molestation. Molestation is a terrifying experience for any child. But sadder still is the aftermath in which parents who have developed patterns of emotional distance, avoidance, and non-confrontation can never help their child heal and become whole.

4. Willful choice of homosexual actions. It should not be assumed that homosexuality comes as a deliberate and conscious decision. At some time in their lives most homosexuals apparently begin to realize that, through no fault of their own, they are primarily attracted to people of the same sex. **Such a realization can be very disturbing and sometimes very painful.** Therefore, the individual often assumes that he or she was born with homosexual tendencies, and gives way to the desires of the flesh.

People suffering from pain caused by any one of these negatives are susceptible to a number of addictions. Homosexuality is one of them.

Does the Bible offer any hope for those who are in the bondage of a homosexual lifestyle? Yes! **A thousand times yes!!** **Listen very carefully; the same Book that teaches the wrongness of homosexual lifestyle is the one Book that brings to them the message of hope and victory!**

Listen to what we have been told in Hebrews 4:15-16, “For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.” **Listen to me very carefully, there is no temptation that Satan can bring against you that Jesus Christ has not already been victorious over – and that includes that of homosexuality!** Listen to the Word of God in 1 Corinthians 10:13, “No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it.”

To the church at Corinth, located in the midst of almost unimaginable sexual practices carried on by the Greeks, Paul wrote these words recorded in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, “Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortionists will inherit the kingdom of God.” **Let me read this to you from the Greek,** “Surely you know that the wicked will not receive God’s kingdom. Do not fool yourselves: people who are immoral, or worship idols, or are adulterers, or homosexual partners...none of these will receive God’s

Kingdom.” **But do not stop there!** Verse 11 says, “And such were some of you; but you are washed, but you are sanctified, but you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God.” The Greek reads like this, “Some of you were like that. But you have been cleansed from sin.”

Ladies and gentlemen, there is no sin that is too big for the blood of Jesus to cleanse! 1 John 1:7 gives us this promise, “...the blood of Jesus Christ, (God’s) Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Thank God there is hope in the blood.

In this God-blessed church, God has graciously delivered men and women from the bondage of homosexual lifestyle. Forsaking homosexual behavior is never easy and never instant. It takes time and an ongoing accountability with others who are holding you up before the Lord! Like any other bondage it simply cannot be taken lightly.

Let me close with this thought: What can we as a Church do to help? There are at least three things that we as a church can do.

1. Pray. Pray that God will make you sensitive to the people that He places around you. There is a good chance you are in contact with someone with deep conflicts who is longing for a compassionate ear. Pray for wisdom and understanding.

2. Love. As you allow the love of Christ to flow through your heart, you can “speak the truth in love” as seen in Ephesians 4:15, just as Jesus did to the woman caught in adultery in John 8:1-11. He spoke to her with compassion (“neither do I condemn you”), but He did not neglect to call sin sin (“go and sin no more”). People who struggle with their sexuality desperately need to know God’s holy love.

3. Trust God. Believe that God can and will change people’s lives. Do not underestimate His power! Remember, Jesus told us in Mark 10:27, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.”

Child of God, regardless of the type of bondage that Satan has on the lives of those around us, Jesus Christ is the answer! And regardless of the bondage that you might find yourself facing, the “blood of Jesus Christ, (God’s) Son, cleanses us from all sin.” Thank God for victory!

If you are not saved, why not today!