

Romans 1:24-32 (Missing Beginning)

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[0:00] Together they have become worthless. No one does good, not even one. For those of you across the hall, that was Romans 3, verse 10 and through 12. Right. We can't separate from the course of the argument that he's making in the book. So Paul is here diagnosing the great common problem of all people.

This problem started in the garden and it proceeds in various form and varying degree to this day. Certainly at times in progressive ways. What I'm pressing hard to get us to see is that you and I need this text as much as anyone else.

It's not just a text for the other. We each and every one of us are found here before any of us encountered the saving power of the gospel. We were identified in some way in this text.

We should not make the tragic mistake of thinking that this text only describes other people. It does do that, but it also describes us apart from the power of the gospel.

This text is used again and again and again as a diagnostic tool to look at the culture around us. And it does that for us, but it also diagnoses our hearts.

[1:33] If we treat it in that other way, we will entirely miss what Paul wants to lead our hearts to. That said, we see in this text the resolute rejection of God.

Verse 25, the first part says, And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God.

Paul here is repeating in this text some things that he said in our previous text, which began in verse 18. You recall the wrath of God being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and righteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

And he doesn't leave us wondering what that truth is. He says in verse 19 that what could be known about God has been made plain to them in the creation. Namely, verse 20, his eternal power and divine nature.

That there is in fact a creator who has the right to rule over his creation. Later in the letter, we're going to see clearly that the law of God is written on the conscience of man.

[3:03] Verse 21 says, For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him.

Rather, they rejected him. Resolutely, they set themselves against him. In verse 23, And exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images.

Resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. And this idolatry takes on many forms and leads to much unrighteousness.

Paul does not leave us able to say, Well, I don't bow my knees to any graven images, so I must be okay. No, he goes on to give us a list of sins that result from this kind of idolatry.

From this resolute rejection of God. He leaves us unable to wiggle out of it at all. Thomas Adams, who was a late 16th, early 17th century English Puritan, said, That which a man spits against heaven shall fall back on his own face.

[4:15] And so let's look at some of that. What results there because of the resolute rejection of God? And this is the second point.

The wrath of moral insanity. You may recall us speaking briefly about the phrase found in verse 18. For the wrath of God is revealed.

Which time I told you that our translations did well not to say will be revealed, although it will. But the particular tense of this verb, it rightly says is revealed or is being revealed.

God's wrath is presently being revealed against the rejection of him in a startling way. Paul says three times in today's text.

You'll see it in verse 24, verse 26, and verse 28. God gave them up. I hope that this phrase strikes fear in you.

[5:26] It doesn't mean one who finds himself in Christ, accepted in the beloved before God. The idea that God would give me up to myself is frightening.

Paul was saying that God abandoned them to their ways. God says to a people who reject him. OK, then go your own way.

And this is a form of judgment to give us over to our own moral relativism, which always concludes in a moral insanity.

Because, my friends, we are not qualified to call the shots. If you think that you have the ability to set the direction for your life, you need a massive dose of humility.

I might just ask the question, how's that going for you so far? Life working out the way it hoped that it would? We're not qualified for the task. Our creator, although, is.

[6:31] And he's spoken a good word, not a burdensome word, a good word that we would obey it. We are creation. We need the creator.

Hierarchy, rightly recognized and applied, is a glorious gift to us. Here, Paul says, God gave them up.

He allows the futile minds and foolish hearts of man to conceive and create all sorts of evil. He begins his list, and I believe spends a bit more time at the beginning of his list, with a sin that is so particularly contrary to creation order.

I think he starts here because the sin of homosexuality is an obvious rejection of God's design for humanity, which, to be clear, was one man and one woman in lifelong monogamy, and all variations, I'll repeat, all variations of this created design are rejections of God.

I think he starts here because it's just such a simple, it's an easy example of the rejection of God. For this reason, God gave them up to dishonorable passions.

[7:51] For women exchanged natural relations for those contrary to nature, and men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another. Men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty of their error.

But let's be careful to note that Paul's list does not end there. He goes on. Again, avoid the temptation to think that this text is merely a text for some other out there.

Do not become his longest, which drives hard his point. We need the saving power of the gospel. Oh, that God would rescue us from our moral insanity.

Verse 28 says, And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

God gave them up to thinking that they knew best for themselves, that we might possibly know best for ourselves. He let them do it. And then he rattles off a list.

[9:06] And I'm not one to hyperanalyze these types of lists. I think there's some danger in that. I do believe that he's being led by the Spirit to jot these things down.

I don't think it's just random. But I also think we can overthink these types of things. He's pressing this all-encompassing rejection, this resolute rejection of God through this.

But it's interestingly broken into three sections. Now, you can look, if you have an ESV like me, at the punctuation. But our commas and our periods did not appear in the original text.

And so these have been added for readability. And in this case, for us to more readily see the pattern. But even without the punctuation, notice the phrases.

They were filled. They are full of. And they are. These are all found in verse 29.

[10:06] They were filled. They are full of. And they are. Now, again, I don't think that there's some kind of hyperanalyzation that needs to go on about that categorically.

The point I want to press is that it's an all-encompassing thing. If you resolutely reject God himself, and you're given over to this kind of moral insanity, it defines who you are.

You're filled with, full of, and you are. You identify in these ways. So let's look at some of them together.

Let's not just glance over them. Also, many of them are very self-explanatory. But verse 29 begins, They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice.

All manner of unrighteousness and evil. This is an all-encompassing phrase and word. By all rights, Paul could have stopped at that point and moved on beyond it.

[11:15] But he feels compelled. He believes it's important to give us examples of this. We're so quick to justify our own sin, to write it off, to not put it categorically in this type of rejection of God, this type of moral insanity.

So he doesn't let any of us off the hook here. Covetousness, which is greedy, exploitive, consuming ambition. Malice, which is a wickedness aimed at another.

They're full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. That's that next section. They are full of, filled with the desire for other people's things.

To the degree that they might actually murder, or as Jesus says, have hatred in our hearts toward another, which is murder in the heart. Full of strife, conflict, fighting.

Deceit, which is treachery for personal gain. Maliciousness, which is a character that intends to do harm.

[12:30] You might still want to wiggle a little, well, I don't know that I'm all that bad. In verse 29 he says, they are gossips, slanders.

He goes big view again. Haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

To gossip is to speak about others with unconfirmed information. To slander is to speak something false, to damage another's reputation.

And I can just about guarantee you, if you have liked or shared something on social media this past couple of years, you're guilty of both of these sins. Insolent, haters of God.

Insolentness is an arrogant rudeness. Haughtiness is arrogant disdain for others. Boastfulness is arrogant bragging. Inventors of evil, coming up with new ways to sin against God.

[13:38] Children, Paul inserts here to not let you off the hook, disobedient to parents. foolish, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

None of us are wiggling out of this. I wore a cardigan today instead of a jacket to tell you how wicked you are. Verse 32 says, though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die.

And the Old Testament commanded death specifically for many of these things. I think Paul here has a higher view than that. He's not talking just to those who know the Old Testament, know the law, but to Gentiles as well.

He's going to continue to make this case on into chapter 2 and to 3. I think what he's drawing back to here is to verse 20. God's eternal power and divine nature because he says at the end of verse 20, so they are without excuse.

They know that they're rebels against God. They have resolutely rejected him and therefore deserve the penalty due an enemy of a king.

[15:06] And yet they do them anyway. Wholeheartedly participate in this kind of sin. And they not only do them, but give approval to those who practice them.

To justify your own sin is evil, but here we see a digression into the justification of others' sin as well. To argue for the case that people can live their life however they might like.

Martin Luther, this is the quote on your bulletin this morning, once said, iniquity consists in this, that you fail to live up to what you are bound to do and do instead what seems right to you, while uprightness, by contrast, consists in this, that you do whatever you ought to do regardless of what seems right to you.

Beloved, we need to recognize that we are all at times guilty of letting our emotions lead the charge. Letting our emotions define the truth.

This is the mantra of our day. If it feels right, then it must be right. And if it feels wrong, then it must be wrong. And why is this the case?

[16:27] It's because of the resolute rejection of God. What are we left with if we reject God and His good order and design in the world? With ourselves. And the moral insanity that ensues.

You must then assume that you're the starting point for what is good and true and beautiful. And you are not. You're not qualified for the task.

And so you do what feels good to you or you don't do what feels bad to you rather than asking the question, what should I do? And recognizing that you cannot be the source of such information. God has condescended to become an author. The maker of heaven and earth has spoken to us for our good.

Never miss it. For our great good. His commands are good for us. Even when they don't feel good, they are good for us.

[17:33] I used to sit at the dinner table as a child, stubborn as I could be to not eat my vegetables. They were good for me. They didn't feel good for me.

My mom would threaten, there's people in the world who would love to have this food and I would say, box it up and ship it to them. On a couple of occasions, I sat until bedtime.

That's how stubborn I was as a child. Thinking I knew best. I just should have ate the vegetables, right? I just should have ate them and moved on. There's a higher and a greater good for us and it is defined not by us but by our God.

He tells us. He shows us lovingly, compassionately how it is that we should walk. Now, a brief but related aside.

I think it deserves some of our attention particularly because of the place in which we live. We have in our very own backyard not far south of us a pastor who has great influence.

[18:45] And it is always with a heavy heart that I name names but I think we ought to be cautioned and we ought to be prayerful about Andy Stanley. We've watched for some time a slow digression that seems to have picked up some speed.

So some of you may know a little bit about a conference that was held this year. I believe it was in May. It was put on by their church. The 2022 Drive Conference in which he said some rather scathing things.

So I want to read to you just a bit. This was from an article written by Denny Burke in World Magazine a publication I would commend to you. Denny says this and I quote Stanley contends that churches must adapt and learn how to include gay people in the life of the church.

After all we should be in awe of the self-sacrifice of gay people whose prayers God did not answer and yet who still love God in spite of the clobber verses from the Bible that condemn homosexuality. That's Andy's term clobber verses one of them Romans chapter 1 verse 26 and 27. Now to be fair to Andy that kind of attitude he may be speaking about is the kind of thing I want to condemn as well where we don't see ourselves in the text.

[20:12] It's always about another. It's always about pointing our finger someplace else. It's always done self-righteously. We're all in the text everybody. We're all in the text. Christians have a lot to learn from gay men and women quote says Stanley who love Jesus that much and who want to worship with us end quote.

If churches want to have a future then they must be more like Jesus who when ministering to sinners never quote started with theology but started with the people in front of him.

Furthermore Stanley argues that quote if your theology gets in the way of ministry like if there's somebody you can't minister to because of your theology you have the wrong theology.

Stanley's message comes across as a straightforwardly affirming position on homosexuality in the church. He valorizes the faith of homosexuals as head and shoulders above the faith of straight Christians.

He says quote the men and women I know who are gay their faith and their confidence in God dwarfs mine. So not only is there room there's plenty of room for them in the church.

[21:30] Now hear me very carefully there is always a place for people who wrestle with sin to come and gather with God's people to hear the truth of God proclaimed boldness and with an invitation to flee to Christ.

There's always room for that. There's never room to call someone who identifies as their sin a Christian. If I were to go around and say I'm a slandering Christian you would say that is the dumbest thing I've ever heard.

Have I at times spoken something untrue about somebody in order to damage their reputation to my shame I have which is the thing I should repent of and flee to Christ for his righteousness as a result.

This kind of language is anti gospel. It doesn't say that people are set free from their sin that they might walk in the truth that Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled the righteousness that's demanded of God and we can have our righteousness found in him and therefore put off these sins it does quite the opposite.

It's devoid of the bad news and beloved we will never grasp the good news as we should if we don't first understand the bad news.

[23:02] Verse 18 the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

This is moral insanity. God defines what is good and best regardless of how we feel and if we are breakers of God's commands which we are it is here in this text every single one of us have broken God's law we have rejected God as king then we have to have a solution we must have some way of fixing this grand problem which is why I'm very pleased to come to the third point I'm glad that we get to end here before we talk about the glorious solution of the gospel people so desperately need to hear let me just say one last thing about Andy Stanley I don't know what to do with a man who teaches things falsely other than to call him a false teacher and we do well to warn people away from such men the gospel matters too much the souls of people matter too much for them to be deluded away from their sin and the rescue that is found in the cross of

Christ so thirdly the glorious solution of the gospel we have to step outside the text just a bit for this one but not far and we can start with the last part of verse 25 God gives them up verse 24 in the lust of their heart to impurity to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the creator who was blessed forever!

reading John MacArthur's commentary he said perhaps Paul in talking about all of this vileness just needed to pick his head up for air for a moment I think even more than that I think that Paul in the midst of writing about such betrayal against God does not lose sight of the fact that regardless of how humanity regards God he is blessed forever whether or not our society rejects God as God he remains God God's worth is not changed by our recognition of his worth and praise God that he works for us in spite of us we have great reason to praise God just as Paul did because he has made a way for us to be delivered from our rejection of him this is why Paul says he's not ashamed of the gospel for it is the power of

God for salvation to everyone who believes this righteousness he talks about in verse 17 the righteousness of God Luther called it the alien righteousness that we need a righteousness that needs to be granted to us that was fulfilled!

[26:36] in Christ we desperately need and it is this gospel message this good news that tells us that by faith in Christ it's ours it's granted to us and all we have to do is repent and believe all we have to do is turn our minds away from sin to recognize that it is a rejection of the most high God to recognize that he has a more excellent way to recognize that there is a just condemnation for our sin and that we would want to be rescued from such wrath to flee to Christ his completed work his once for all sacrifice on our behalf many weeks ago as we spent our first week on verses 18 through 23 I stated this I copied And pasted this out of my notes at the conclusion of our study of this chapter you ought to either feel a great condemnation for your lost state and

I pray will flee from the wrath to come to the mercy of Christ or you ought to feel an abundant overflowing gratefulness having already received Christ's mercy in the salvation of your soul so join me as I pray to that end to