

Grace to You :: *Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time*

Abandoned by God, Part 2

Scripture: Romans 1:26-32

Code: 45-15

Let's share together in a word of prayer as we approach the Scripture tonight.

Our Father, as we open the pages of the sacred book, we pray that we might realize that You are speaking, that this is not a human message but a message from the living God. May we hear it as if our Lord Jesus Christ were speaking or as if Your own voice was thundering from heaven as in days gone by. Help us to understand what You're saying to perceive the truth and to respond as You would have us and we thank You, Father, in Christ's name. Amen.

Romans chapter 1 is our text tonight. And we are looking at this marvelous first chapter, particularly verses 24 through 32 under the title "Abandoned by God." And we're following the chronicle of the fallenness of man as presented by the Apostle Paul in this powerful and insightful passage. Paul's theme in Romans is the gospel, the good news, that's what gospel means, the good news. But before the news can be good for us, we have to realize how bad things really are. And so, Paul begins the good news with the bad news and the bad news is in verse 18, "The wrath of God is continually being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men."

The bad news is that God is angry with men. And we have been asking the question why is God so angry, so angry that He condemns men to eternal hell. Why is God so angry? Well Paul shows us that there are really five reasons why God is angry and they are the five steps downward in the descent of man away from God.

The first one was revelation. The end of verse 18 says that men hold the truth. How? Verse 19, "God has manifested it to them." And how has He done that? Verse 20, "From the creation of the world." In other words, God reveals Himself to men. That's where it all begins. Men know God at first. Revelation.

The second step is rejection. Verse 21, "When they knew God they glorified Him not as God, neither were thankful but became empty in their reasoning and their foolish heart was darkened." The first point says they have the truth of God and this one says they reject the truth of God. They will not glorify Him as God and they are not thankful for Him as the source of everything, but turn to their own empty reasoning and their own dark and foolish heart.

And then the third step in the decline of man is rationalization. Verse 22, "They profess themselves to be wise and become the most supreme fools." Man has revelation, he moved then to rejection and then rationalizes that in his empty darkened heart he is wise and becomes the biggest fool of all.

And that leads fourthly to religion. Verse 23, "He then exchanges the glory of the true God, the incorruptible God, for an idol made like corruptible man and birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things." Men have the truth, they refuse the truth, they think they know the truth anyway and then out of their own supposed wisdom create gods of their own making.

And that leads to a fifth step, reprobation. And that begins in verse 24. Religion is man at the bottom, man running as far away from God and the true knowledge of God as he can possible go. And inventing a false system of religion, and as I've been saying to you, when you see religion around the world, that is not man at his highest, that is man at his lowest. That is not man trying to find God, that is man having abandoned God and been abandoned by God now inventing a religion out of his own emptiness. A false religion that he substitutes for the true one because he will not accept the truth. Why? John 3, "He loves sin too much."

And so, we finally come from religion to reprobation. And that is the filthy pit of man's existence. And you will notice verse 24 tells us how it is that man reaches this level. It says, "Wherefore God gave them up." Verse 26 says, "For this cause God gave them up." And verse 28 says, "God gave them up to a reprobate mind." Man starts with knowledge, revelation. Moves to rejection, then to rationalization, then to religion and finally to reprobation...a reprobate mind. And as we said to you last time, this is a judicial punishment on God's part. The verb "God gave them up...gave them up...gave them up," as I pointed out last time is used in many many places in the New Testament to speak of turning someone over to a court, turning someone over to a judge, turning someone over to a sentencing, or turning someone over to a punishment or an executioner. God literally gives men up. He abandons them.

Now mark this. This then becomes the fulfillment of verse 18. How is the wrath of God continually being revealed? The wrath of God is continually being revealed as God gives men up to the consequences of their own rejection. He abandons them. He lets them go. And as we pointed out last time, the evil of our society is the wrath of God at work. People say if we keep going the way we are, God is going to judge America. And I submit to you that based on Romans 1, God is already judging America. We don't have to wait for fire and brimstone, we're already being judged by the fact that God has abandoned this society to the exercise of its own sinning willfulness. The evil of society then is the outworking of the wrath of God.

What is man's punishment then? It is a compounding escalating snow-balling sinfulness with all of its attendant atrocities. That is God's wrath at work. Just let them go to the consequence of their own sinning.

Now we know the effect of sin. We know what sin does to people. It degrades men. It debases the image of God. It strips man of his glory. It pulls off his coat of arms, as it were. It robs him of his dignity. It steals his peace. And in place it gives him fear and torment and guilt. It causes trembling, it convulses the conscience. And some people kill themselves to find comfort from the torment. Sin destroys relationships. It rots a good name. It wipes out a marriage. It utterly devastates a family. It debauches a city and a nation. Thomas Watson said, "Sin puts gravel in our bread and wormwood in our cup." Bernard said, "Sin is a death always dying." And so man is turned over to the law of his own sinfulness and its compounded consequences.

And people really don't like it. They run off to the psychiatrist, the psychologist, the analyst. They run off to take a vacation to try to forget. They travel. They entertain themselves. They drink. They take drugs. They seek alleviation of the consequences of sin every way possible. But have you noticed how utterly impossible it is? In fact, the highest suicide rate in America among any profession is that of psychiatrist who not only can't help people but can't help themselves. And this is the judgment of God upon them, that there is no way out of the inevitable consequence of their sinfulness. There's no alleviation. There's no freedom from the bondage. There's no limiting of the pain. There's no easing of the guilt because they're turned over to wrath. And so it is the divine act of judgment on them that they are doomed to compound their sinfulness and have to endure all of its consequences.

Some people have studied the ermine, that furry little thing that they use to make coats. And they have said that an ermine would rather die than defile its skin or fur. And so it goes to incredible lengths to protect itself. Man has not that capacity. It is the legacy of his sinfulness, having been abandoned by God, that he cannot keep himself pure. And his false religion has no restraining power either.

Now let me say at this point that there's some honey in the lion. God lets man go so that man can run to the utter despair of extreme despondency and in the midst of that find that he has no resources and cry out to God who will hear and answer. Who comes unto Him but the one of a broken and a contrite heart, the one who is begging in his spirit, the one who is hungering and thirsting for righteousness, sick of his sin. And so, as Isaiah 19:22 says, "He smites in order that He might heal." As Psalm 119:71 says, "It is good for me that I was afflicted." Sometimes that's what it takes.

So, God abandons sinful truth-rejecting man to the self-destruction of sinfulness. And this is His wrath at work. Now three times in the passage it says God gave them up...God gave them up...God gave them up. And I think each time Paul makes a different point. First is the essence of sinfulness and we saw that last time. Then is the expression of sinfulness. And then is the extent of sinfulness. And each one sort of takes a little different angle.

First in verse 24 and 25 we find the essence of sinfulness. God gave them up to uncleanness. The essence of sin is that it is uncleanness. That is its nature, its essence. It is akatharsia. I don't know if you know what that word means, it's translated unclean many places or sometimes impure. The literal meaning of akatharsia is the contents of a grave. It came to mean rot or filth or decay or even dirt. God gives over to rot, to filth, to decay, to dirt, to what is defiling. Its moral meaning has to do with sexual vice and sexual sin. And where does it come from? Verse 24 says it comes from the lust of the heart and ultimately results in the dishonoring of the bodies.

So, from deep within man comes this spewing out of uncleanness, like the drippings from a broken sewer because this is what is in man's heart. He is abandoned by God. He is left to his own evil. In fact, 1 Thessalonians 4:5 says that man lives in the lust of sensuality. That is the mark of those who know not God. They are totally driven by their own lusts, their own desires...consumed by them. And so that is what God gives man over to.

In James 1:14 it says every man is tempted when he is drawn away of his own lust. And when lust conceives, it brings forth sin. And when sin is finished, it brings forth death. So man is drawn into sin by the uncleanness of his heart through his lusts and it draws him toward death.

Now the term "lust," epithumia, means a wrong desire or an illicit craving. It is the mark of man without God that he craves what is wrong...what is vile, what is wicked. In Ephesians chapter 2 verse 3 it says, "We all had our manner of life in time past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind...now listen to this...and were by our very essence the children of wrath." Now watch this, when a person lives guided by the mind and the lusts and the desires, they are literally a working out of the wrath of God. And that's how it is with man in the world, the essence of man's sinfulness is uncleanness that comes from his heart.

In Matthew 12:34 Jesus said, "O generation of snakes, how can ye being evil speak good things, for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks." What else would we expect out of you but that which is evil, for your heart is evil. That's basic to man's fallenness. In Matthew 15:19 it says, "Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies, and these are the things which defile a man."

So there's the essence. And God gives them up to the essence of their sinfulness. He just lets them go and lets it take its course. And it effects their bodies, verse 24 says, they dishonor their bodies between themselves. Dishonor means to degrade, to insult, to treat shamefully, is the very opposite of honor. Timao is honor, this is atimazo, to dishonor, to treat with shame.

And I see that in our society. Our society treats the body with shame in so many many ways. We across the world have a low view of human life. We think it's entertaining to murder people. On television or in the movies it goes on all the time, continually degrading man's view of the dignity of

man. We have a sport that we all watch from time to time where men get in a ring and just pound each other into oblivion...which I think reflects in many ways our view of the dignity of man. We have no sense of man's glory. We step on anybody's neck to get anywhere we want. We sexually abuse one another. We criminally abuse one another. We verbally abuse one another. We treat each other with disdain and ill will. And we dishonor our bodies in myriads of ways.

You see, sin has poisoned the very roots, that's what 24 is saying. The whole head is sick and the whole heart is faint, Isaiah said in chapter 1 verse 5. In Ecclesiastes 9:3 the preacher said, "Madness is their hearts while they live." Man's evil is like his pulse, it's always there.

Thomas Watson said, "A river may have fair streams but vermin at the bottom. Thou carriest a hell about thee, thou canst do nothing but thou defilest it, thy heart like muddy ground defiles the purest water that runs through it," end quote. And as such, men are under the power of Satan. And Satan becomes the agent of God in the outworking of the wrath of God.

Now why has all this happened? Verse 25, "Because men have exchanged the truth of God for the lie and worshiped and served the creature more than the creator who is blessed forever, amen." Because...watch it now...because man abandoned God, God...what?...abandoned man.

Now let's go to the second element in man's lostness and his abandonment by God and that is the expression of his sinfulness. And these terms are just ways that you can kind of guard your thought as we flow through. It says in verse 26, "For this cause...backing up to verse 25...because of man's abandoning of God, God gave him up unto vile affections." Passions of dishonor, literally, degrading desires. This is the expression of what's inside. It's already been hinted at in verse 24 as it worked out to the dishonoring of the bodies. Now Paul wants to get very specific....how does man defile and dishonor the body? Through his vile affections. In other words, illicit loves. And how far did this go? What is the supreme illustration of this? How far does man's corruption go? What is the ultimate expression of his defiled heart? It is a monstrous vice. And it says in verse 26, "For even their women did exchange the natural use for that which is against nature and likewise also the men leaving the natural use of the woman burned in their lust one toward another. Men with men working that which is not fitting and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was fitting."

They do what is not fitting, but God lets them suffer what is fitting for such evil. Now listen, Paul wants to show us how sinful man is. And he wants to do it in a concise way. So when he wants to demonstrate the vile affections that rise out of the human heart, he picks the worse most disgraceful disgusting degrading passion there is, homosexuality. Because it is not a perversion, it is an inversion, it goes further than perversion. The words refer to an unnatural sexual relationship.

Let's look at verse 26 and see the women, first of all. You might be interested to know that according to latest latest statistics, 13 percent of all males are homosexual and only five percent of all females.

There seems to be a resistance or more of a resistance on the part of women, although that may be breaking down in the statistics wildly increasing. It may seem that women are resistant because of the nature of their creation as a responder to men by design and because they are the led rather than the leaders, they come along a little more slowly in this end. That is why Paul says this, "For even their women did this." Because there is something especially shocking about that. And when it says they did exchange the natural use for that which is against nature, Paul uses a very well established term for sexual intercourse, chresis and that is exactly what he's talking about. They carry on a sexual activity contrary to the intention of the creator. It's against nature. It's against the God-given creation.

I mean frankly, folks, you don't even have to be very smart to figure that out. The same idea is present, by the way, in 1 Corinthians 11:14 where the idea is that they go against the very way God made them. That's the same idea of the term used there, though it's a different context. It means that they do something that is utterly opposite the way God made them. And the word "even" is just a potent little word. The purer more modest responsive sex, even they come to such inversion. Do you know that animals don't do this? In all of the studies of animals, they never found homosexual animals. Hodge, the commentator of a century ago said, "Paul first refers to the degradation of females among the heathen because they are always the last to be affected in the decay of morals and their corruption is therefore proof that all virtue is lost," end quote. There's a book out now called THE JOY OF LESBIAN SEX.

And then verse 17 says, "Likewise also the men." The sex drive in men seems to be stronger, for the most part, than women and we're not quite so shocked at this. But likewise even the men leave the natural use of the woman. I mean, that's obviously the way God intended it by the very physiology of it. And men began to burn in their lust one toward another. Men with men working that which is unseemly and receiving in themselves that recompense of their error which was fitting. God says they get exactly what they deserve.

You might be interested to note that in the Greek Paul uses not the term for women and men, but the term for female and male. He uses very brutal terms, very biological terms. Not the noble words that speak of the dignity of man and woman. He says with them it's a corruption of the biology. It's nothing more than perverted sex at a biological level. Males leaving the normal use of females, females leaving the normal use of males...the basest human inversion of God's intended order.

You see, when man forsakes the author of nature, he forsakes the order of nature. The text actually, if you look at verse 27 where it says men with men working that which is unseemly...could be translated males perpetrating shamelessness. A congregation is being established, by the way, in Atlanta, Georgia to serve what is supposedly the largest homosexual population in the south. It will be the twentieth local church of the universal fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, described as the gay denomination. By estimate of the National Institute of Mental Health, there are now four million who consider themselves homosexuals and some homosexual organizations estimate the

number as high as 10 million. And we really don't know because there are a lot of folks who won't admit it. It's a massive problem.

Now I want to give you just a little footnote. Look back at verse 27 and I did some tapes on this, if you want the full thing on homosexuality you can get those. But verse 27 it says that, "They burned in their lust one toward another." There is a level of lust among homosexuals that is not known among heterosexuals. There is a burning that is beyond description. And I'm not going to get too graphic with all of this because I think I'd send you screaming for air. But you really have to understand that there is a lust level that is incomprehensible. It is not uncommon, for example, for the average homosexual male to have 300 partners per year. It is not uncommon for them to have to go to the hospital and have all manner of articles extracted from deep within them. Sometimes doctors have to be brought in to separate them, to take limbs out from each other.

Halpern(?) who is the coroner for the city of New York who is not a Christian but just a secular coroner wrote a book after retiring and said, "I did 60 thousand autopsies and I am not one to make a judgment on life style but I would warn anyone who chooses a homosexual life style to get ready for the consequences. In 60 thousand autopsies," he said, "I can take one look at a corpse and tell you if it was killed by a homosexual because of the massive mutilations." There is a burning level of lust that is beyond anything that a heterosexual understands. There are frequent murders and other crimes that are beyond description.

It is not normal. It is the inversion, it is the most abnormal relationship imaginable.

This morning in the Daily News just above the Levitz ad, just to show you how flippant we are, it says, "Gays are not harmful to society, massive research study shows." The word "massive" is always very intimidating and convincing. It says this, it's from United Press, "Homosexuals are not so different from heterosexuals and do not cause decadence or moral decay according to a study presented to the American Psychological Association. A four-year research project by 31 scholars including some homosexuals claim that homosexuality is no more related to mental illness or psychological problems than is heterosexuality. Biologically the study found it is as natural to be homosexual as straight." And then it goes on, "There is no evidence that homosexuality harms the family." Homosexuality ends the family "The Society for the Psychological Study of Social Issues endorsed the study at the annual A.P.A. meeting in Los Angeles this week. The report will be published in an anthology titled HOMOSEXUALITY AS A SOCIAL ISSUE. William Paul, 40-years-old, the project research director and coordinator and lecturer at San Francisco State University said, "The task force that completed the massive research project was monitored to assure its objectivity."

Sure, a whole lot of people abandoned by God without any ability to do anything but come up with their own empty reasonings made biased by their own lusts. It says, "Most media portray Lesbians and Gay men as sort of exotic and strange, Paul said in an interview, adding that their similarities to

straight people were greater than their differences. Therapy aimed at converting homosexuals to heterosexuality is ethically questionable and probably doesn't work, the study said. Adding that anti-sexual...anti-homosexual bias within the psychiatric profession has slowed public acceptance of many conclusions about homosexuals. Gays are unlikely to be harmful to individuals or society, the study said. There's no evidence that homosexuality harms the family. Many homosexuals raise children and contribute to family cohesiveness just as straight people do, the researchers found. Most Gay parents are sensitive to keeping their kids' options open to sexual preference. They are also intending to be discreet with their lovers around the children for fear of having them taken away by the courts. There simply is no evidence demonstrating that homosexuality or tolerance of it is either a symptom or a cause of social decline, decadence or the fall of civilization."

Did you get that last statement? "There is no evidence demonstrating that homosexuality is a symptom of decadence or the fall of civilization." Oh? They haven't read Romans 1, have they? But that's because they're not interested in God, are they? And they are left with their own silly reasoning.

In San Francisco, the city government holds workshops on S and M safety. They are advertised in the front page of the San Francisco Chronicle and you can come under the auspices of the city of San Francisco and learn how to have Sado Masochistic homosexual sense and not hurt yourself in the process.

Boyd Stephens, the San Francisco coroner estimates that 10 percent of his city's homicides are related to Sado Masochistic sex and they'd like to prevent that by helping them learn how to do it without killing each other. If they teach them that, it won't be Sado Masochistic sex.

I'm just here to tell you that the Bible says it is abnormal. It is a manifestation of the decadence and the decline and fallenness of man. And it is the most vile earthly sin because it is an utter inversion of the order designed by God. It destroys everything. And the evil in it is inherent in its consequences. It literally destroys those who are involved.

Now I'm not going to take the time to go into all the Scriptures about what the Bible says about homosexuality. Romans 1 is sufficient for tonight. But, I mean, if you really want a very clear word, just read Genesis 1, "He made them male and female and said they were to leave their parents, join together and be one flesh," that's it, folks. Male and female...zakar and neqebah, and there isn't any third kind. That's it.

God literally destroyed an entire civilization in Sodom and Gomorrah for homosexuality. In Leviticus 18 and chapter 20 the punishment for a homosexual was instant death. But you want to know something else? First Corinthians 6 says, "Such were some of you. Homosexuals, effeminate, but you are washed, you are sanctified." Isn't that great? God saves those kind of people.

Look back at Romans 1 verse 27, "Men with men working that which is unseemly." That is too weak a word, it means working that which is the shameful thing. It even says the shameful thing, that thing you don't even talk about like Ephesians 5:12, it's a shame to speak of things done in secret. That thing that shouldn't be on our lips, that vile utter perversion. And they are judged in the destructiveness of their own sin, receiving in themselves. Isn't that interesting? It doesn't even come from the outside. They receive in themselves the reward of the error which is fitting for that kind of sin. See, there's no arbitrariness to divine judgment, sin always gets exactly what it deserves. The punishment perfectly fits the crime. The horrible incredible indescribable results of homosexuality are its own condemnation. Unnatural vice is its own perverted reward. People in it are eaten up by guilt, pain, physical disease, terrible wounds, despair, dissatisfaction...fast developing a whole new area of medical care for the people who have the strange and weird deformities that come from homosexuality.

So, the essence of man's sinfulness is an unclean heart. The expression of his sinfulness is that he will go to the most perverted inverted thing imaginable. That's how evil man is. Then you hear some peabrain come along and say, "Well, man is basically good." No he's not. He's basically rotten.

Now that leads me to the third one. And this is the extent of man's sinfulness. And we don't need to spend a lot of time on this, it's just a catalog of sins that's somewhat common to Paul's manner of writing. Verse 28, "And as they did not like to retain God," and he comes right back to the same thesis, "because they abandoned God, God gave them up." They didn't want to retain God in their knowledge, so God gave them up. There is that very same indictment again. They did not want to retain God in their knowledge. They abandoned God. God abandoned them. That's the basic problem. Men do not want to know God. They do not want to trust God, to obey God and so God has given them up.

In verse 14 of Job 21, "Therefore they say unto God, Depart from us for we desire not the knowledge of Thy ways. What is the almighty that we should serve Him? And what prophet should we have if we pray unto Him?" Go away, God, we are not interested. In Proverbs chapter 1 verse 7, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of knowledge but fools despise wisdom and instruction." They don't want it. And verse 29 says, "They hate knowledge and they did not choose the fear of the Lord."

It's always been that way with men. And by the way, Job is probably the oldest book in the Bible. In Jeremiah 4:22 the prophet says, "My people are foolish, they have not known me, they are stupid children, they have no understanding, they are wise to do evil but to do good they have no knowledge." And in the ninth chapter of Jeremiah, I think it's the sixth verse, "Thine habitation is in the midst of deceit, through deceit they refuse to know Me, says the Lord." That is it with men. They refuse to know. Their own desires cloud them and then the God of this world has blinded their minds, right? Second Corinthians 4, "The natural man understandeth not the things of God, he can't, they are

foolishness to him."

So, because they will not know God, verse 28 says, God gives them up. And to what? Quickly, "A reprobate mind." And what is a reprobate mind? It means a worthless mind, by the way. They said God is worthless so God gave them over to a worthless mind. In Jeremiah 6:30 it says, "Reprobate silver shall men call them because the Lord hath rejected them." Reprobate silver was rejected silver, worthless silver, it didn't meet the standard, didn't come up to the assayers qualification, thrown out. And God just throws them out because they have a worthless mind. It doesn't come up to his standard. He gives them over to their debauched and depraved reason. They find God worthless to their knowledge and God gives them over to a worthless mind.

And to what extent do they go? This is amazing. They immediately do the things which are not fitting. They don't do things....they do things that are not fit for man. They do things that are not the intention of God in creating man. We've already seen how inverted the expression can be and now all of a sudden we see a list of things that they do that's enough to stagger you. You want to see a definition of man? Here it comes, you ready for this? Verse 29, "Filled...get that word?...not affected by, or influenced by...but filled with, totally filled with, all unrighteousness." That's a generic term in the text and it embodies all of the components that are about to be listed. God gives them up and they are literally filled with all unrighteousness. It is unmitigated, unrelieved, unmixed unrighteousness.

And then he goes on to list the things that men do. Some texts have the word "fornication" some do not. But certainly fornication is an expression of man's evil. It is already applied and implied in verse 24. And the inversion of it is already what we discussed in 26 and 27. But even if we leave fornication out, the rest is a staggering list. Look at it with me and I'm just going to briefly comment on each word because Paul's intention is not to have a word study on each one, but just to fire it by so you're drown in it. Here is the extent of man's sinfulness:

He is literally filled with all unrighteousness. What kind? One, wickedness...the word means those who delight in doing wrong.

Covetousness, that is greed, craving more than you have and wishing you had what somebody else had, never being satisfied with your possessions but lusting for other things. And in Ephesians 5:3 it's even applied to lusting for sex.

And then maliciousness, that is another word for wickedness, it means evil in general and perhaps it speaks of evil toward others more specifically than the word wickedness does.

And then you notice also, full of envy. That means hating someone because they have what you want or they are what you want to be.

Murder, killing someone, so common today.

Then the word strife, argumentative, fighting, quarrelsome.

And then the word deceit, the literal Greek term means a fish hook, a treacherous lie.

And then you have malignity, this is spite, a desire to hurt or harm someone, to get back at them. It has the implication of a revenge.

Whisperers, that's private slander.

Backbiters, that's open slander.

Haters of God, and that means they don't want any rules, they don't want any accountability, they don't want anybody telling them what to do.

Insolent, that means they have a contempt for everybody. Well, we have people in this generation like that, they do not respond to any authority at all.

Proud, that means an attitude of superiority.

Boasters, that means vocalizing your supposed superiority and bragging.

Inventers of evil things, those devices and forms of evil invented by men to give new ways for them to express their filthiness, novel forms of evil. I'll never forget walking down the street in a major city in America and passing a sex shop and taking one look in the window and just about falling over in a dead faint. Inventers of evil things.

Disobedient to parents, good heavens, how did that get in here? Some of you kids kind of came alert on that one. That's a mark of the extent of man's corruption.

Without understanding, that means senseless, mentally and morally no understanding.

Covenant breakers, has there ever been a society whose word was any more worthless than ours? Covenant breakers.

Watch this, without natural affection...you know what that means? No love for family, that's literally what the Greek term is...no love for family. Millions of mothers kill their babies before their born. Millions of others smash and clobber their children around till they're abused and some die. On April 14, 1981 a fifteen-year-old girl said, "Mother, close your eyes, I have a surprise." Her mother closed

her eyes with a smile on her face and the daughter pumped a bullet through her brain. Without natural affection.

Implacable, that means cruel, ruthless and pitiless.

While you're at it, unmerciful, uncaring, unforgiving, without any grace in your spirit.

That's what marks man. And if you don't believe it, pick up the paper and see if you don't read about these things...wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness, envy, murder, strife, deceit, malignity, whisperers, backbiters, people who don't want any rules, insolent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, and unmerciful. Look at them on TV, listen to them on the radio, read about them in books, they're all over the place because that's man. And why is he like that? Because God gave him up and sin running its course drives him deeper into the pit. This is the wrath of God at work and man is left to the essence and the expression and the extent of his depravity.

And then comes the coup de grace, verse 32, and Paul comes right back to his initial argument and this is a knock-out punch. "Who knowing the judgment of God that they who commit such things are worthy of death." Now stop there. Wait a minute. Do you really think men know that? Oh yes they know that. That's why there are so many guilty people with so much of pain and anxiety inside because they know it's wrong and they know it will be judged and they know there's an inevitability about the judgment of God, even the God they will deny. It says it.

In Romans chapter 2 verse 15, "The Gentiles show the work of the law written in their hearts." How? "Their conscience bearing witness and their thoughts accusing, or excusing, one another in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men." They have a conscience and they know the judgment of God. They may not admit it but they know it.

You know, it's even inherent in the law that man makes, isn't it? Even in our society most of these things are against the law basically. Sexual sin, rape, perversion is always recognized as something unlawful, wickedness and murder and deceiving people. We even have laws against slander. We even have laws in juvenile delinquency, disobedient children. In other words, man has even made laws that show he knows these things are wrong. And where there is not a law in relation to these, there's at least a social conscience about some things, like it's right to tell the truth. You see, that's all the law of God written in the conscience. They know God. They know God from creation and they know His laws from conscience and they know that the people who do these things are worthy of death.

But the pit is so deep, verse 32 ends, that they not only keep on doing these things but they have pleasure when others join them in the sin. If you think it's shocking, you just need to read the history

of Israel. They had full light and they did this. And they knew they were worthy of death and they did it anyway. And here at the end of verse 32, you come to the lowest point of human squaller. To sin is evil but to sit there and delight in the perversion of somebody else is the deepest evil of all because if you sin, you could say, "Well, I was a victim of temptation," couldn't you? You could say, "I was victimized and tempted by the enemy." But when you can sit back and not even be involved and just delight in the sin of others, you have reached the bottom.

And now we do that. We lift up the homosexuals and we lift up the vile fornicators. And we have reached the deepest evil. We are not just the victims of temptation, we enjoy other people sinning. Incredible to me. People will go and sit in a theater and watch people sin and enjoy it. Man is not good. Man is evil. And the point is that man's wickedness is so deep, it is so far, it is so total that he is hopeless...that's right, hopeless.

Now, you say, "Boy, Paul is really coming on heavy." That's right. I mean, by the time you're going to get...we're only in chapter 1, folks, and this goes on till chapter 3. But by the time you get to chapter 3 and you hear about the saving grace of Jesus Christ, it is such a welcome that there ought to be a stampede to receive His free gift of salvation.

There's a specie of ant that lives in some parts of Africa. It lives in subterranean tunnels many many feet down in the earth. And the young are sheltered there and the queen is housed down in this tunnel network. The workers will leave and they go on forging trips to distant places and return to the nest with the food for the rest of the colony. And I was reading about this and it said that if while they're away the queen is molested, somehow the workers know about it even though they're far away and they become very nervous and uncoordinated. If the queen is killed they become frantic, they rush around aimlessly and they'll all die without ever returning. Isn't that interesting?

Now we don't know what kind of signals they send out but that's what happens. It is thought that the workers in the normal situation are constantly oriented to the queen by some radar-like devise and if she is killed, all their orientation ceases, frenzy ensues and ends in death.

I read that and I said I can't think of a better illustration of man. He comes into the world connected to God and when he is cut off from God he is utterly disoriented and moves inexorably to an inevitable death. And may I add, according to chapter 1 verse 20, he is without...what?...excuse. Beloved, the news is bad, very bad.

But I can't stop with all that bad news because the news is also good. Paul said this in another place, "Jesus Christ is come to save...what?...sinners of whom I am chief." And Paul's salvation is a living testimony that God can reach into the deepest pit and receive the penitent soul. If you don't think you need Jesus Christ, it's because you don't know how bad off you really are. I hope you know and I hope you come to Christ. He'll forgive your sin, He'll wash you clean.

I close with the text to which I alluded, 1 Corinthians 6. "Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God? Be not deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, or covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners shall inherit the Kingdom of God. But such were some of you and you are washed and you are sanctified and you are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God." He's in the business of saving sinners, I hope you'll allow Him to save you before the consequence of sin is irreversible.

Father, tonight we have again been exposed to a terrifying strong word. We do not necessarily like these things. We don't want to hear these things. We don't even want to wallow in these things. We don't even want to think about them. But there they are. And man must know how deep the pit before he understands how great the salvation. He must understand how total the guilt before he can understand how wondrous the forgiveness. He must understand how inevitable the death before he can rejoice in the gift of eternal life.

Father, help us to hear with hearing ears and if any in our midst tonight are children of wrath in whom Your wrath is being constantly revealed because of the consequence of their sin compounding, may this be the night that they turn to Christ and open their heart to Him, knowing that He died on the cross and took the punishment for their sin at the hand of God that they might not bear that punishment. May we accept His death for us and resurrection and know He was our substitute and come in faith, seeking forgiveness and life in Him.

Father, we pray that You'll bring into the prayer room those You would have to come. That You would draw all of our hearts into Your presence for Your glory in Christ's name. Amen.

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