

Romans 1:18-2:11, Deepening Crisis

The gospel according to Paul is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile, V16.

The key verse of last week was **Romans 1: 18**, *The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against **all the godlessness and wickedness of people, who suppress the truth by their wickedness**, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them.*

We all have been at this point of realization that there is a God and that He sustains His creation and rules over it. We all have come at one point in time to a realization that we can't solve our problems or even can't take care of ourselves. We may consider this as a moment of crisis or a junction in our lives.

Suppressing the truth

V21-23 reveals what it means.

*For 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**.*

*²² Although **they claimed to be wise**, they **became fools** ²³ and **exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles**.*

Steps

1. Men neither glorify God nor gave thanks to Him. God is silenced, all references are removed. Resistance to read the bible in public. No one wants to admit there is a God. God is ignored. Effects are immediate: thinking became futile (evolution, tower of Babel) and their hearts were darkened (No compassion, oppression of the weak).
2. Claim to be wise. They imitate God. They claim the ability to know everything. Result; "they became fools". Instead of progressing their solutions or inventions create more problems.
3. Exchange God's immortal glory for images "to look like a mortal human being and birds and animals and reptiles". Observe that it goes from human beings downward to reptiles.

Our world today is full with images like in the old or ancient times. These images are directly worshipped or represent ideas that we adore. We worship forces like sex, ambition and greed. We worship beauty, youth, adventure, leisure. We worship power, military might, etc... All of these are our gods, aren't they?

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And we are so foolish, in our twisted, demoralized and demoralized world, to cling to our hurts and refuse the healing of God that He offers right there and now.

The Deepening Darkness, V 24-32

Paul mentions two characteristics of the civilization he lived in and they also describe our society today; first is godlessness and second wickedness.

Godlessness is disrespect of God and it results in wickedness – injury and hurt to others. God is ignored completely!

When men lose God.

V24 – 32, the apostle reveals the effect of this godlessness – wickedness that will follow when men lose God, they lose themselves.

Wickedness at work.

Paul identifies a three-step process. Each step in the process starts with “God gave them over”, a phrase that explains what is going on in our times.

First reference, V24.

Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

First mark of wickedness in a godless society is widespread sexual immorality—the degrading, or dishonoring, of the body. Because of Therefore, note that this immorality is a result of the idolatry in which men fall.

Second reference, V 26.

Because 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.

The sexual confusion that comes from this is actually an attempt to destroy and defeat God’s plan in creating us male and female.

Third reference, V 28.

Furthermore, 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.

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The verses following are a description of a society that is nearing collapse. It reflects a desire to exploit and destroy one another. A depraved mind destroys, rends and fragments everything it touches. Its public hostility is marked by increasing cruelty and violence.

V32, Although 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.

Sneering at the effect of all of these, they even approve of it and even work to spread their wickedness. It even enters our educational system. They dominate the media and even seek legal status for their evil ways. The deepening darkness that Paul is talking about is spreading in our day as well.

God gave them over

What does it mean "God gave them over"?

God removes His restraints – "giving them over". So that was done in secret is allowed to break out into the open and widely accepted. This is the sign of the wrath of God. The first mark of wickedness in a civilization is that sexual immorality (which has always been present becomes widely accepted.

This means that God allows men and women to experience the full effects of their attempts to satisfy their hungers, cravings and desires apart from Him. He allows the people to discover that they do not have the answers. He is forcing us to experience the full effect of what we do. He makes us harvest the crop that we insisted on sowing. Even though we would like to abandon it.

You may ask, why does God give us over to this kind of experience? He does it because it is only when darkness prevails, and despair and violence are widespread, that men welcome the light. **Isaiah 9:2**, *The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of deep darkness a light has dawned.*

Sinful Morality, Romans 2: 1-11

Perhaps you consider yourself as not to belong to the kind of people Paul has been writing about. However, he then has a warning for us. **V1**, *You, therefore, have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge another, you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.*

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He speaks here to the ones who pass judgment on others. They clearly know the difference between right and wrong. They are aware that wrong actions merit the judgment and wrath of God. Also, he says that judges are as guilty as the ones they are judging.

We are urged to examine ourselves, **Romans 2: 5-11**, *But because of your stubbornness and your unrepentant heart, you are storing up wrath against yourself for the day of God's wrath, when his righteous judgment will be revealed.* ⁶ God "will repay each person according to what they have done."^[a] ⁷ To those who by persistence in doing good seek glory, honor and immortality, he will give eternal life. ⁸ But for those who are self-seeking and who reject the truth and follow evil, there will be wrath and anger. ⁹ There will be **trouble and distress for every human being who does evil**: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile; ¹⁰ but **glory, honor and peace for everyone who does good**: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile. ¹¹ For God does not show favoritism.

Paul tells us here that when we refuse to judge the sinful areas of our lives that God allows us to see, we are: storing up wrath for ourselves. We are laying up treasures, but the treasure is wrath!

The way out

As if we are trapped and perhaps we misunderstand the message that Paul gave in Rom. 1?

The picture Paul gives us of God, is that He loves us so much that He tells us the truth. He loves humanity and wants to restore it to the way He planned it to be. Having fallen in the trap of self-deceit, He is telling us of the only way out.

In and through Christ, God gave us that way out and there is no other way!

In great love and at tremendous costs, God provided a way out. We only have to surrender ourselves. We must give up our self-seeking and living for ourselves and begin to live for the God who made us.

This is the gospel at which Romans 2:1-11 is aiming. There is no hope, none whatsoever, except in a day-by-day yielding to the plan and the program of God as we find it in Jesus Christ.

Amen

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Benediction **Romans 16:25-27.** ²⁵ *Now to him who is able to establish you in accordance with my gospel, the message I proclaim about Jesus Christ, in keeping with the revelation of the mystery hidden for long ages past,* ²⁶ *but now revealed and made known through the prophetic writings by the command of the eternal God, so that all the Gentiles might come to the obedience that comes from*^[a] *faith—* ²⁷ *to the only wise God be glory forever through Jesus Christ! Amen.*