

## **Romans 1**

Pastor Jeremy Cagle, January 28, 2018

Well good morning everyone. You can go ahead and turn with me in your Bibles to the Book of Romans, as you've already read from this morning. As you're doing that, Quentin mentioned that we're going to be continuing a series today we started last week called "The Book of Romans in 3 Months". We're looking at the Book of Romans in three months, or a 12-month, period of time. Romans has 16 chapters in it. And if you take them one a week (or about that, maybe a little more), you can finish it in about 12 weeks or so, which is what we're doing in this series. Because we want you to see the book in its totality. We want you to see it from 1,000 feet up.

I've told you before Romans has been called the great cathedral of the Christian faith, because it stands head and shoulders above all the other books in the Bible. In this series we want you to see the cathedral from a distance. We want you to enjoy the view and peer in through the windows and admire the architecture. We're going to go pretty quickly through the book to allow you to do that.

To say this another way, when I was at the Grace Advanced Academy last year, they told us that in the early stages of your church you really want to go fast through a couple of books to give your people access to that material. You don't want to get bogged down in one thing. You want to keep moving for a little while, so people who are visiting can see what you believe, so they can go online and they can read or they can listen to the series and see what you're all about. That's what we're doing in this series too. We're going through this quickly to show you what we're about, the Book of Romans in 12 weeks to show you what we believe, particularly as it relates to the gospel.

I told you before the Book of Romans is about the gospel. It's about the good news that Jesus Christ died for sinners. Chapter one actually introduces you to that. We're going to start off on that note, and we can do it like this. If you think about it, there's a lot of different ways you can introduce someone to the topic of the gospel or salvation. There's a lot of ways you could start a book like Romans. For instance, you could talk about people's felt needs. That's one way you could do it. You can tell people that Christianity gives them what they need, it fills a void in their life, it meets a longing in their heart, it gives them purpose or meaning, or whatever they're looking for. To do this, some churches have actually passed out surveys in their community asking the question, "What is the greatest need that you have?" or "If you're looking for a church what are you looking for?" They get those responses back, and they provide that for the people. That's how they introduce them to the gospel. That's one way you could do that.

Another way you could do it (start a book like Romans) is with promises. Kind of similar to the first one, but you could promise people certain things, promise them purpose and meaning, promise them peace, and joy, and a better life. One popular pastor recently wrote a book called "Your Best Life Now". He said that if you follow Jesus, you will get your best now, you'll be healthy, wealthy, and wise. Unfortunately, he didn't say that if you follow Jesus you'll also get trouble and a sword as well, and you'll have to take up your cross in order to do it. That's another way to introduce people to the gospel.

You could also give your testimony to someone. You could tell them how Jesus Christ has changed you. You could give someone else's testimony to them and talk about how Christ has changed them. There's a lot of different ways you could do this, but I bring it up to point out that Paul doesn't use those approaches in the Book of Romans. He introduces the book in a very interesting way. Let me read this to you and then say a few words about it.

If you look in Romans 1:16, this is how Paul introduces the subject. He says, "16 For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 17 For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by faith.' For...", and here's the introduction, "the wrath of God is revealed from heaven..."

Just a little background on this, the Book of Romans is a letter written by Paul to the saints in Rome. Verses one and seven talk about that, which we read a moment ago. Verses 11 through 17 say Paul had never been there before. Verse 13 says, "I do not want you to be unaware brethren, that often I have planned to come to you (and have been prevented so far)..." That might mean Paul had never been to the city of Rome. That might simply mean he'd never been to the church. One way or the other he had never met this body of believers. He would interestingly go to Rome as a prisoner at the end of his life and be martyred, so he would meet them at some point. But right here, he hadn't gone there yet.

What he does is he writes them a letter telling them everything he would say in a first trip, laying it all out there. That's why the letter is so long. And he starts off with, "For I'm not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God..." In other words, that's what this letter is about. "It's about the good news, and it's for everyone who believes," he says. Verse 17, "It's given by faith." Then he says in verse 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven," which is another way of saying this, the gospel starts with God. It doesn't start with us. It doesn't start with our needs, it doesn't start with our promises and testimonies, as wonderful as they may be. It starts with God and the fact that He is angry at our sin.

In his commentary on Romans, James Montgomery Boice says that,

Paul was God-centered rather than man-centered in his message, and he was concerned with that central focus. Paul knew that what matters in the final analysis is not whether we feel good, or have our felt needs met, or receive a meaningful experience or testimony, what matters is whether we come into a right relationship with God. To have that happen we need to begin with the fact that we are not in a right relationship with God. On the contrary, we are under His wrath and in danger of everlasting condemnation at His hands.

They say that you can't find the cure unless you know what the disease is. This is the disease. You can't solve a problem if you don't know what the problem is. This is the problem, plain and simple. We have offended God and we are under His wrath. We've broken His law. That's how Paul starts the Book of Romans. To show you this, I know you guys like my sermon illustrations, but I've been banned from the bottle. (I make that joke a lot, but I use the water bottle too much).

This is different from that. Actually, somebody saw me bring this in here and they said, "Is this for us?" Absolutely it's for you guys. I have a set of Ten Commandments with me up here on stage. These are the Ten Commandments, or the laws, God has given us to live by. What I want to do is walk you through them to see how you're doing with keeping them, how you're doing with keeping the law. I did this with our youth at summer camp, so they've already been through this. So I thought it would be good to take the adults through this as well. Let's walk through these one at a time and tell me how you're doing at keeping them.

The first commandment is: You shall have no other God's before me. Have you guys kept this one? (You can speak out loud it's okay). No? All right. So we have to tear this one, right? The second one is this: You should not make for yourself an idol. Has anybody ever made an idol out of something in their heart? Yeah, okay and so we broke this one as well. (You got eight more to go). You shall not misuse God's name. You shall not blaspheme. Has anybody blasphemed before? Yeah, we all have, either out loud or in our heart. Next one is: Remember the Sabbath Day. There's a lot of different views on whether we should keep the Sabbath today or not, but let's just say this: has everyone made Sunday all it should be in their heart before the Lord? No, so...all right. Here's one that really got the youth's attention here: (they started weeping and gnashing their teeth when I read this one. We had to catch one of them. He was running off into the woods) Honour your father and mother. Has everybody done this? Do you even have to ask the question? Here's an interesting one: You shall not murder. Has anybody ever murdered anybody before? If you have, you need to contact the police. Here's the interesting thing about this, Jesus said, if you hate someone in your heart, it's the same thing as murder. So we've all broken this one. The next one is: You shall not commit adultery. Jesus said if you lust after someone in your heart, it's the same as committing adultery - broken this one. A few more here guys. Thanks for hanging in there with me. You shall not steal. Has anybody stolen anything? I remember the time I stole a GI Joe toy when I was a kid. We've all stolen something. Here's one that I think I can stand up here and rip all day long: You shall not lie. I won't even ask the question on that one. Here's one more. And this is another one too that we could rip all day: You shall not covet. Covet means to want something that's not yours. We've all broken that one as well.

That's just a visual illustration to point out when it comes to keeping the law, we've all blown it, haven't we? When it comes to pleasing God with our righteous acts, this is what it looks like. It's just a mess. And we've torn it over, and over, and over again, which means that God is angry with us. Paul says He's furious with our sin.

You could look at it this way, I grew up in a small town and I loved the game of tennis. But I didn't have a lot of places to play. So one thing I did when I was little is I would hit the ball against my parent's house, the garage door that was full of windows. You can see where this is going. I had to hit it right between the windows on the door, or I would break one. So it was great for my aim and my intensity. But it hurt my relationship with my parents because the day finally came when I drove a ball right through one of those windows. Do you know what I didn't do to fix it? I didn't put duct tape on it and tape it back together again. You know what I didn't do to fix the window? I didn't put glue on it and repair it that way. It was shattered. It was blown to bits. My friends, I had to replace the whole window. I had to replace the entire thing.

Friends, you need to do that with your life this morning. If you want to go to heaven, you have to replace it with a perfect life. You've shattered the law. You have broken it into a million pieces. As a matter of fact, if you think about how many lies you've told, we can say you've broken it into a billion pieces. If you think about how many times you've coveted, we could say a trillion pieces. And you can't put that together again with tape. You need a new life. And Jesus came to give it to you. That's the gospel. That's the cure for your disease. He came to replace your life. Before we get *there*, we have to start *here*. Before we get to the good news, we have to talk about the bad. And the bad news is that you have broken the law.

The Book of Romans talks about a lot of things that we're going to get into. It talks about Jesus' death and resurrection. It talks about this world and why it's so bad. It talks about the Holy Spirit and the struggles we face as a Christian, struggles with the flesh, struggles with sin and how the Spirit gives us victory through those. The book is going to get into election and predestination. It's going to talk about assurance and eternal security, Israel and the church - all these wonderful things. But it starts here. We need a Saviour. We're in trouble because we're not in a right relationship with God.

In the words of verse 18, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven..." You can image picking up the Book of Romans and seeing how big the scroll would have been in the first century and thinking, "Is that what this whole thing's about? What are you going to say next?" As a matter of fact, if you look at that word "wrath" in Greek, it's the word *orge*, from which we get the word orgy. It refers to unbridled passion or emotion. In the context here it means rage, intense rage, unquenchable rage, rage that can't be stopped unless it's poured out on something. That's how passionately God hates sin. I think you know this, but if you don't, sin makes God angry. He can't stand all of this. If you noticed, Paul says, "This wrath is revealed from heaven," which means all of heaven is involved in this. The angels hate it. The members of the Godhead hate it. The saints who are living there now hate it. And it's directed against all ungodliness (or those who act like there is no God) and unrighteousness (or those who act like there is no law). He says, "...of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness..." In other words, they see all of this, they see the truth, and then suppress it, and pretend like it's not there. God hates that.

Here's why, verse 19 says, "That which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse." In other words, no one can look at this world and say there is no God. There's too much evidence for that. No one can look at the universe with all its wonder and beauty and say, "What a mistake."

I read somewhere that looking at the universe and saying, "This was all a mistake," is like watching a tornado rip through a junk yard and assemble a Boeing 747 jet. It can't happen. You have no excuse for thinking that sort of thing. I don't want to spend too much time on this point other than to give you just one argument in favor of creation. It's called the argument of irreducible complexity, which says that at the most fundamental level, life could not have evolved. It was too complex for that. Because the parts of a cell can't function on their own. The ribosomes, and mitochondria, the plasma membrane, the nucleus, can't live without each other or be independent. If they are, they die, and therefore life had to be created all at once. It had to be

formed in an instant, otherwise, it never would have been formed at all. When you deny evidence like that Paul said, "It makes God angry."

Let's say it like this, you can't live an evil life and go to God after you die and say, "Oh well, I didn't have enough evidence. Let me into heaven." It doesn't work that way. No one will say that. You can't go to Him when you die and say, "It wasn't my fault God. You should have made Yourself known." No, Paul says, all men are without excuse because God has made Himself known to them. You had plenty of evidence and you suppressed it. That word "suppress", if you notice, is an active word. It means you actively put it out of your sight. You had plenty of proof and you pushed it away.

Joseph Stalin was the head of the Soviet Union from 1922 until 1953, and he was a renowned atheist. He hated the Christian faith. In fact, by the time he came to power, there were 50,000 churches in Russia, or the Soviet Union. By the time of his death, there were 500, because he destroyed the rest. He wiped them out. He sent the pastors to work in prison camps. He sent their congregations to Siberia. He shot the rest, because he thought religion was poison. He thought it was dangerous to the country, or so he said. Some of the people that were with him as he lay dying say (as he was dying and unable to talk) Joseph Stalin shook his fist at the ceiling as if to say, "I hate you God." Because he knew that God exists, everybody does. He just tried to suppress it. That's the kind of thing we're going to talk about this morning.

If you're taking notes (this is a very sober chapter, as Quentin said), but in Roman's one, Paul gives us five reasons why God is angry with the godless. Here's five reasons why God is angry with the godless. Like I told you, Romans is about the gospel. It's about the good news and the hope we have as believers. It is a very positive book. It ends on a high note. But before we get to the high note, this is the low stuff that he begins with. It starts in chapter one with God's anger toward the godless. As he gets into chapter two, he talks about God's anger towards religious, or moral people. But he starts here with just those that flat out deny God. He starts off with this.

Here's the first reason why God is angry with the godless, is because they don't honour God. They don't honour God. They don't give him the glory and the praise that He deserves because they suppress it.

You can suppress me and nothing bad's going to happen to you. If you punch me in the face, I'll take you off my Facebook page, or I won't give you a Christmas card or something. (Just let me take my glasses off first). But you're not breathing my air. You're not living on my planet. You're living on God's. Therefore, if you suppress Him, there are consequences to your actions. There's a price you'll have to pay, and Paul writes about that in verses 20 through 21. He says, "For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. For even though they know God they did not..." and here's the first point, "...honour him as God." If you notice the word for is repeated here just like we saw earlier, because Paul is building an argument and giving a progression of thought. And the progression is this: God is angry with men because they ignored His creation and did not honour Him for it.

To honour someone means to have a high view of them or to treat them as their office deserves.

If we're talking about God, it's the highest treatment you can imagine. It's the highest office you can imagine. When it comes to God, to honour Him is to acknowledge that He is God, and you are not. He's up here, and you're down here, beneath Him. You submit to Him. You do what He says. You keep His commandments. I think that's the greatest problem we have with God is we just flat out don't want to submit to Him. It's not an issue of evidence, it's an issue of obedience. We want to do what we want to do, and He gets in the way of that.

In 1974, R.C. Sproul wrote a book called, "The Psychology of Atheism," in which he said atheists don't believe in God not because of ignorance but because they don't like Him. Not because of evidence, they have plenty of that, it's because of their sin. They just don't want to obey. He says,

The New Testament maintains that unbelief is generated not so much by intellectual causes as by moral and psychology ones. The problem is not that there is insufficient evidence to convince us that there's a God, but that we don't like what the evidence has to say. We have a natural antipathy towards Him. In a word, the nature of God, or at least the Christian God, is repugnant to man. Man's desire is that God does not exist because he does not want to submit to Him.

Have you guys ever heard that saying, "I've learned two things in life: there is a God and I'm not Him"? Can I just tell you some people never learn that, ever? They never learn that there's a God. They think they're God: "It's all about me. I can do whatever I want."

I grew up in what has been called the "me" generation. I'm not going to ask you to raise your hands if you grew up in the "me" generation, but we were taught that it's all about me. I remember family members telling me to look out for number one and take care of myself first. I also remember growing up hearing advertisements that said things like, "Just do it," and, "Have it your way." Burger King doesn't always follow that, by the way. If you go into Burger King and ask them for something very specific, sometimes you don't have it your way, but that's a side note. We were told, "Live your life," that's another advertisement. "Rules don't apply here." If you go into their store and start stealing stuff, I promise you they'll tell you the rules do apply here.

My generation ran up credit card debt higher than any generation before. We lived in our parents' house until we were in our 30s or 40s, maybe 50s or 60s. We stopped having as many children, because they're such a burden. Because it's all about us. We wanted to do. We wanted to look out for number one. Paul says God is furious when you think like that. He is angry because there are rules to this universe. There is a right and there is a wrong and He determines all of that.

To quote from R.C. Sproul again, he says,

The word *authority* contains within itself the word *author*. God is the author of all things and therefore He is the authority over us all. He created the universe, He owns it and His ownership gives Him certain rights. He may do with the universe whatever pleases because it is His and you need to acknowledge that. You need to honour Him. When you don't, it makes Him angry.

This leads to another reason why God is angry with the godless. We've got five of these, so we'll go pretty quickly, but another reason why God is angry with godless or unrighteous people is because they're not thankful. They don't honour Him as God, and they're not thankful because quite simply, they have no one to be thankful to. Does that make sense? Do you guys get that? Maybe they have nowhere to express their gratitude. It falls flat because they have nowhere to take it. They say, "Thank you," and they leave it there. There's nowhere to send it.

I won't say too much about this but Paul says next in verse 21, he says, "For even though they knew God, they did not honour Him as God or give thanks." It's hard to be thankful to someone you don't believe in. It's hard to express gratitude to a God you deny. A friend of mine once said that his dad is lost. He said, "Every time that I hear him pray it is so weird, because I know what he's thankful for, but I don't know who he's thankful to. I don't know where he's directing the thanks. Every time he prays I don't know where it's going." That's what Paul was saying here.

I was doing some research on this this week and came across a cartoon that had the picture of a family praying before turkey dinner. It said, "Thank you evolution for slowly turning this species of dinosaur into a walking ball of meat with a tiny head." No one talks like that. No one thanks evolution. (Some of you guys are laughing. You just now got that? Okay. My cartoon references are usually pretty funny I think). No one thanks an accident for anything.

To show you the seriousness of this, we're all God's creatures, and there's nothing worse than an ungrateful creature, amen. There's nothing worse than an ungrateful child. It's insulting. It's offensive. We all hate it when we give our kids money, or food, or clothes, and they don't even say "Thank you" for it. "Thanks mom." That's all you want. You don't want an IOU slip, you don't want them to go down to the bank and sign something. You just say, "Thanks."

I heard about a child complaining to her parents recently because she was rich, and her friends were making fun of her for it. Her parents said, "You're not rich. You don't have any money." They said, "You don't have a job. You don't have a credit card. You don't have a bank account. We're rich." Friend's God is rich. He's the one with all the money. He's the one with all the life, and breath, and the one in whom we move and have our being. Paul says in the Book of Acts, everything you have comes from Him. Everything you are is from His hands, and the least you can do is be thankful for it. The least you can do is receive it as a gift. You didn't earn your birth, that's silly to even talk about that. It was given to you out of mercy. When you don't respond that way, it makes God angry.

The story is told of a scientist who wanted to challenge God to a man-making contest. And so he said,

God we don't need You anymore. We've moved past You now with our science and our accomplishments. So to prove it we want to challenge you to a man-making contest to see who can make the better man. God said, 'Okay.' So the scientist bent down to pick up a handful of dirt and God said, 'Stop right there, get your own dirt.'

You don't even have any dirt without God. You don't even have any ground to stand on. So you have to be thankful, which leads to another reason why God is angry with the godless. (And you can see these building on each other). This is because they are foolish. They don't honour God, they don't give thanks, and they're foolish, which are strong words here. Paul's not trying to insult anyone, he's just stating a fact. But if you do all these other things it will affect the way you think.

Some of the most hostile people I have ever met brag that they're open minded. Do you guys know what I'm talking about? Open minded now has a totally different connotation than what it sounds like. It's the kind of thing Paul's talking about. In verse 21, if you read, he says, "For even though they knew God," it's the word "know" there. It's a knowledge word. "In their minds they knew God, they did not honour him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened."

Just a couple thoughts on this, the word "futile" there means "empty" in Greek, or we might say "airy". You might translate this "air-headed" or "full of hot air". There's really just no substance to thought, it just kind of floats around out there being blown around by the wind. Paul says that godless people are like that in their speculations or their thinking, and their foolish hearts are darkened or blind because they can't see straight. If you're in the dark, you lose all sense of perspective. You can't see the hand in front of your face. You can't see the wall when you're about to walk into it.

Just to show you what he's talking about here, do you guys know what the word "agnostic" word is in Latin? It is *ignoramus*. It's *ignoramus* because an agnostic, it's not an insulting term, an agnostic is an ignorant kind of guy. By their own admission, they have no knowledge on the subject. "Ag" means "no" and "nostic" is "knowledge". They have no knowledge of God. Yes, if you look at some of the most famous agnostics in history, they wrote 1000s of pages on the subject of God, didn't they? They consider themselves to be experts on the subject. Paul says that is a futile speculation, it doesn't even make sense to do that. You see a book on God written by an agnostic, why would you open it? It shouldn't have any pages in it.

In the 1980's, Greg Bonson, a Christian apologist, debated Gordon Stein at the University of California, Irvine (I think it was). Gordon Stein is a well-known atheist on the existence of God. It was called "The Great Debate." You can actually go online and read the notes of this. It was very interesting. Bonson told him at the beginning that, "We can't even have this debate unless you tell me from an atheist point of view how you know truth exists." He said, "I have an answer to that. I believe in God. Truth comes from God. But as an atheist how do you know where the laws of logic come from? We're going to use the laws of logic in this debate. Can you tell me where they come from?" Gordon Stein couldn't do that, but he went on to argue with Greg Bonson for two hours and 15 minutes. That's what Paul is talking about here. That's just dark. That's just foolish. You know there's a God, and you suppress it. You know there's a God, and you don't honour Him or thank Him. And now you become foolish in your speculations, and you begin to say things that don't even make sense. You go down the rabbit hole, and you go further and further into it, and you can't get out again.



I remember as a philosophy student in university listening to my classmates try to decide whether we were actually sitting in the classroom or not. I'll say that again. I remember as a philosophy student listening to my classmates try to decide whether we were actually in the classroom or not. If you've ever been to a philosophy class, you'll know that's not unusual. They spend hours talking about that. And I thought, "Do we really need to have this discussion?" Pinch yourself.

I also remember studying philosophers like Fredrick Nietzsche and Jean-Paul Sartre, well known atheist existentialists, who say nothing is true and there's no meaning to life. I remember asking my professor, I said, "Why don't those guys just kill themselves? If they really believe that, and they spend all this amount of time trying to find truth, and they can't find it, this is so bleak and so miserable why don't they just end their lives?" My professor said, "Jeremy, that's a great question of philosophy. Do we just end it all? Should we try to kill ourselves?" That's what you come to if you deny God. You can't even figure out whether you should kill yourself or not. You can't even decide if all this is worth living. That's why some of these great philosophers actually went mad, like Frederick Nietzsche.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky, a Russian philosopher, once wrote that, "If God does not exist, everything is permitted." Murder, suicide, evil, "It's all permitted if there is no God", because there are no boundaries. And that's a terrifying thought. Some people are headed that way, and it makes God furious.

It brings us to a fourth reason why God is angry with the godless, and that is because they are idolatrous. They're idolatrous, they make idols in their heart. All men worship something. John Calvin said, "Our hearts are factories constantly producing idols. As soon as you get one idol out of the way you pick up another one." When they don't worship God, this is what men do. Paul writes in verses 22 through 23, he says, "Professing to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man, and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures."

If you notice, Paul says an exchange is taking place here. They're exchanging the image of the incorruptible God for something corruptible, the eternal God for fallen man. To show you how insulting this is to God, not only do they not worship God for what He created, but they worship His creation. Imagine how insulting that would be. Imagine how angry it would make you to worship, they worship what His hands have made. As Isaiah said, they take a block of wood and with half of it they make a fire and stay warm, and with the other half they bow down to it and say, "Deliver me for you are my God." You can imagine God sitting up in heaven watching this and getting sick to His stomach.

I've got to be honest, when I first read this part of the chapter, I thought, "Well nobody does that today. We're far too sophisticated for that." Then I read that the Hindus worship 300 million Gods, and many of them are images made in the form of men, and birds, and four-footed animals. The Buddhists have a temple in Sri Lanka set aside to worship an ancient tooth they said came from the holy Buddha. Some followers of Wicca today worship the female body. Certain Christian sects, they call themselves Christians, they worship saints, and relics. Paul's point here is that all of that is godless too. This is a scary part of the chapter. He says not only is

it godless and infuriates God when you don't acknowledge Him at all, it infuriates God when you acknowledge the wrong thing as God. He places that right alongside the atheists and agnostics and here's why, because statues don't create anything. Amen? Relics don't create anything. When you worship them and give them credit for doing it, it infuriates God.

It was said in the 16th century a Japanese warlord built a statue to his God but shortly afterwards an earthquake came along and toppled it to the ground. As the statue was falling the warlord fired an arrow at it in anger and he said, "I put you here at great expense, and you can't even guard your own temple." Well of course he can't. It's a false god, and you shouldn't worship him.

That brings us to a final reason why God is angry with the godless and that is simply because they're sinful. This is what it all boils down to at the end of the day. This is where this leads. The godless don't honour God, they don't give Him thanks, they're foolish, idolatrous because they are sinful. This all leads to their sin. Or we might say, this all comes from their sin, it just goes both ways. They don't want to submit to God, and so all this happens as a result. I can't get into everything here, or read all of this, other than to point a few things. If you notice, in verse 24 he starts off with, "God gave them over," that phrase: "Therefore, God gave them over," because they did all of this. You see that in verse 24. You see it again in verse 26. You see it again in verse 28, that same phrase. The idea is that they wanted to do all this stuff anyway, so God gave them over to it. They didn't want Him around, so God says, "Fine, I won't hang around." They don't want to listen. God says, "Okay, I'll leave." And here's what happens as a result. Verse 26 says, "For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman..." Verse 28, if you read on down it says,

...just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

As you read that list, I just want to say to you, be very careful how you look at this. This morning as we've talked about the evolutionist and the atheist, as we've talked about the agnostics and the Hindus, as we're reading about homosexuality here in this passage, be sure to stay humble because you're in this list as well. If you look in verses 28 and following, how many of you have ever been unmerciful before? Anybody? We all have. If you notice, Paul lumps that right in here at the end of that list on homosexuality. How many of you have ever been greedy or envious? Yeah, we all have, right? How many of you have ever been deceitful or a gossip? We've done all these things, and we've failed to keep God's commands.

Well the passage in here goes from bad to worse. They start off denying God, and they end up denying their sexuality. They ended up denying their identity, what they were made to be. While it goes that far down. in God's eyes. this is all sin. Like I said, we've all broken the law. We've all fallen short of his commandments. As one pastor said, "No one struts into the kingdom of God. We all come with our heads hung low."

George Whitfield was watching a condemned criminal on his way to be executed. And as he watched him he said, "There but for the grace of God go I." I want to encourage you to read a chapter like this and say that this morning, "There but for the grace of God go I." If God were to give me over to my sin, I would go the same way. If God would remove His restraining hand from my evil heart, I would do this too.

Which leaves me to ask the question, how do you end a sermon like this? I was thinking, "Boy, you read a chapter like this and you feel crushed to the ground." How do you pick up again? I told you, Romans is about the good news. What's the good news? It's about the cure for the disease. All right, well we've read the disease in exquisite detail. What's the cure? Well Paul doesn't tell you in chapter one, but he does tell you in Romans chapter three.

If you just want to turn over there, again, we're going to look at Romans three on its own in week here soon. If you just want to read ahead a little bit, Paul doesn't stop in Romans chapter one, he goes on to write other chapters in the book. If you look in chapter 3:23-24, Paul says this, he says, "For all has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus."

Several years ago, I was talking with a lady who was visiting the church I was at. And she said she was interested in attending. Out of curiosity I asked her, "What are you trusting in for your salvation?" She said one word, she said, "Christ." She didn't say law, she didn't say works, she didn't say a little bit of Him and a little bit of me, she said Christ, and that is exactly what Paul is saying right here. "For all has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God but are justified as a gift by His grace through Christ."

We could say it this way, the Bible says that where you and I sinned, Jesus never did. Were you and I did all this stuff in Romans 1 (or lots of it), He did none of it. He was godly in every sense of the word.

Here's what this means. I have another set of commandments here for you. I just want to walk you through these to show you what Jesus did. "You shall have no other gods before me." Did you know Jesus kept that every day of his life? Every single day. This one here, "You shall not make for yourself an idol." He kept that every day of his life. He was born without sin, He lived without sin, He died without it, never made an idol. You can go all the way through, "Do not use the name of the lord your God in vain." He never did that. He kept the Sabbath, honoured His mother and father. What would it be like growing up as Jesus' brother or sister? "Why don't you act like your brother Jesus?" "You shall not murder." He never had a hateful thought in His head. They nailed Him to a cross, and He did not have one hateful thought. "You shall not commit adultery." He was pure all His days. "You shall not steal," never did that. "You shall not lie." He never did that. "You shall not covet." He never did that.

Here's what Paul is saying in Romans chapter three: he's saying that, in His grace and mercy on the cross, Jesus offered to give you this. And He offered to pick this up and take it all on himself. That's what Romans chapter three says. This is the great exchange. This is how you're getting to heaven. You don't need a change of life, you need an exchange of life. You don't need life

support, you need a new life, and Jesus came to do that for you. He came to keep the commandments and die in your place, so you could be saved.

Will you believe that this morning? Will you trust in Christ? Will you read Romans chapter one and feel the weight of it, and feel the heaviness of a chapter like that? Then turn over to Romans chapter three and see some help, see some hope. Will you be humbled by all this? Will you refuse to say, "I'm better than these people, better than the atheists, better than the agnostics, better than the Hindus?" Will you say, "There but for the grace of God go I?"

The gospel starts with this. It starts with the fact that we broke the law, failed to keep the commandments. But it ends with hope, because it ends with Christ. Will you trust in Him today? Let me pray for you now that you would, if you haven't.

Father, we thank You for Your Son the Lord Jesus Christ, who took on our flesh. And in His mercy on the cross He took on our sin. There was only One sinless Man Who stayed that way all His life, and it was Your Son. And in His mercy, He bore all our sins. Lord I pray that if there's any here this morning who have not trusted in Christ, that their eyes would be open to the weight of their sin and the weight of their Saviour Who saved them from all that they have done.

I don't know where everybody's at this morning Lord, but I'm sure as they're looking through these broken commandments, everybody can relate to this. We've all fallen short. Lord, may You drive some to the Saviour. Those who are saved, Lord, I pray that they would rejoice in what Christ has done for them. May we hold Him high in our hearts and in our estimation. May we remember that the Book of Romans doesn't stop in chapter one, but it goes on to chapter three and so much more. May You be honoured as we study it, Lord. Just as importantly, may You be honoured as we take it into our hearts and live according to it. Thank you for Christ and all He has done. May we proclaim His message to a lost and dying world. We pray this in His name. Amen.