

Romans 1:16-32 “Why The World Is Upside Down”

Well as we continue our study in the book of Romans I want to just remind us that last week we really had an introduction to this beautiful book of the Bible and Paul as he began simply introduced himself as a bondservant of Jesus Christ, that he was called to be an apostle and that his calling in life was to proclaim the gospel or good news of Jesus Christ.

And then he spent some time just giving some of the highlights of who Jesus was and he said that Jesus was the son of David and the Son of God and that He actually fulfilled what the prophets of old had been saying. In doing this Paul was saying my message is not a new message but an old message that now sees its fulfillment in Jesus Christ.

And then Paul went on to convey that he prayed for those who were in Rome, that he wanted to come and visit them and he wanted to see them established in the faith and that he would also be mutually encouraged by their faith.

He then stated that he was in debt Gentiles of the world and also to those who were both wise and unwise and really his debt was this great burden that he had in his heart to share the love of Jesus Christ.

And so today if you will look with me at verse 16 we'll get started. It says ⁶**For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek.** Paul says that he is not ashamed of the gospel of Christ. Paul I believe knew that Jesus had saved him from a life of religious emptiness and that the Lord had done so much in his

life and because of all that God had done in him Paul was unwilling to cower in his faith.

I want to simply say today that we ought not be ashamed of Jesus and His great work on our behalf. The life, death and resurrection of Jesus is the only hope that the world has for forgiveness and a restored relationship with the Father.

In life I think we can find ourselves quite passionate about a great many things. Today I would ask you is Jesus the thing that most drives your life? I would say for Paul that he did not care what anyone said or thought about his love and willingness to share Jesus.

Paul says that the gospel of Jesus is the power of God for salvation to everyone that believes. To briefly define salvation we could say that it is deliverance from sin and its consequences. Certainly that salvation is found in Jesus alone.

And notice that this power of salvation is available to who? To all that believe...You know I am so very thankful that coming to know Jesus as your Lord and Savior does not require a long list of accomplishments, it does not require us to achieve great religious feats...Instead it requires that we would simply come to Jesus by faith. Ephesians 2:8-9 says this ⁸**For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,** ⁹**not of works, lest anyone should boast.**

You might notice also here that this salvation through Jesus had an order to it and that order was first to the Jew and then to the Gentile...and we might look at that and say “Hey no fair Lord.” We

ought to keep in mind that the Jewish people are the chosen people of God. The Lord has a special place in His heart for His people.

Listen to what we learn over in Romans 9:3-5 as Paul speaks of this special relationship the Jewish people have with the Lord. It says this

³For I could wish that I myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my countrymen according to the flesh, ⁴who are Israelites, to whom pertain the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God, and the promises; ⁵of whom are the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, the eternally blessed God.

Amen. I would just encourage you to do some searching in the scriptures and you will see that the Gospel of Jesus is indeed for the whole world but there is a pattern that first this truth came to the Jews and then to the Gentiles.

Over in Deuteronomy 7:6 we have the following about Israel which says **⁶“For you are a holy people to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for Himself, a special treasure above all the peoples on the face of the earth. If you look at the life of Jesus He also made mention that He was sent to the people of Israel and not to the Gentiles.**

So certainly Jesus has a special place in His heart for the people of Israel and Paul knew that and made it a regular practice to speak of the blessedness of the Jewish people.

If you look at verse 17 it says this **¹⁷For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”** Paul says that in the gospel the righteousness of God is revealed...we should briefly define the word righteousness and it

simply means the absolute rightness of God...It means purity through and through and an amazing truth about Jesus is that when you and I come to the Lord Jesus and we believe in Him we actually find that our sin is taken away and the righteousness of Jesus is placed upon us...In Christ we are seen as pure, spotless and without blemish.

And notice that this life that we can enter into by believing in the Gospel of Jesus Christ is entered into from faith to faith...and that simply means that we receive Jesus by faith, we are saved by faith and we continue on in faith. Our whole life when we come to Christ must remain in that place of simply trusting and following Jesus.

I don't want to get too far into the weeds with this but if you just read the book of Galatians they had a big problem and that problem was that they initially came to Jesus believing in faith but then suddenly others came and said if you really want to be a believer and you really want to walk with God then you need to begin to keep the rules to maintain your salvation...Paul said no way, no how that isn't the truth...You and I must remain in a place of faith as we go through life. The moment we begin to think we have something to do with salvation or we think we have to maintain our salvation by works we are walking away from the simple truth of just following Jesus by faith.

So to this point in this letter we have had Paul introducing himself and then he just shared the hope that we have in Jesus and the salvation that can be found in Him as we come to Him in faith and I think that as Paul wrote this it was really an incredible letter in that I think Paul really as he wrote anticipated what the people reading it might think or say.

And so now that Paul has spoken about this salvation or this freedom that is found in Jesus you and I might think well what exactly is it that I need to be rescued from...Now you and I should know that Jesus came to save those who have sinned and who are far from God but Paul is writing this as if the people have no knowledge whatsoever of Jesus and the forgiveness he offers for sinful man.

And so now beginning in verse 18 Paul is going to take several chapters here to begin to speak about the simple fact that all of humanity has sinned against God and because of that sin we have a big problem in that we are all separated from God and deserving of an eternity in hell. This simple truth is why we need the salvation that is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Now this section of Romans that discusses the sinfulness of humanity will reach all the way through to the end of chapter 3, so just have it in your mind here for the next few weeks that we are going to be confronted kind of repeatedly about our sin...Understand there is an answer and that answer is Jesus but I would simply say that an individual cannot be rescued from sin if they do not know that they need to be rescued.

So let's look at verse 18 which says ¹⁸**For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,** So here we see that God has a wrath or an anger within Him and we are told here that it is revealed from heaven and the wrath that God has is against what?

Well we are told here that it is against ALL ungodliness and unrighteousness of men. In other words God is seen here with an

anger against the sinfulness of humanity. I think you and I know this but we should understand that God is decidedly and forever separated from those that are found to be sinful. We learn in the garden back in Genesis that even one single sin from Adam and Eve brought about death to their relationship with God.

God is certainly right and just in all of His judgments and we might ask how is it that God has revealed to us that He is against sin. Well He has said that we ought not sin and in the book of Genesis 6:5 we learn the following about humanity when the Word says

⁵Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. I think you know where this narrative leads as God speaks to Noah and has him build an ark because the whole world was filled with evil. And Noah for 120 years we are told built the ark and really spoke to the people of their evil.

We might also think of the narrative of Sodom and Gomorrah in Genesis 19 and we can see that God unleashed His wrath on these cities for their sinfulness.

That word for wrath should be understood I think as we look at it. There are actually two words that are translated this way in the Bible and the first is the word Thumos and it conveys the idea of a red hot anger, of a rage or a losing of temper, a quick brief passionate anger. The second word we find and this is what we have here in this passage is the word orge and it means to grow ripe, to build up over time and to be controlled.

So the idea here is that the anger of God is slowly but surely building against the ungodliness and sinfulness of humanity. One day we

know that God will again judge the world and this time the world will end as the earth will be consumed with fire...After this Jesus will make a new heaven and a new earth.

Notice also here that Paul says that there are people that are suppressing the truth and this means that people are actively pushing down the truth, they are restraining the truth or they are hindering the truth.

Look at verses 19-21 and we'll see what it is that people are suppressing it says ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, even His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened.

Here Paul is saying that the truth that there is a God should be known to them but they have pressed it down or suppressed it.

And then Paul begins to speak about the simple fact that Creation itself speaks to humanity that there is a God. That in creation we can see the invisible attributes of God which would include His incredible intelligence and His abilities to Create and his creativity.

I believe as we look at our world that we can clearly see that we live in a world that rejects God and in particular we live in a world that rejects the Creation of God. I am sure we are all familiar with Darwin's Theory of Evolution and this reaches back into the 1850's...but the

idea that was given is that somehow you and I have evolved from little pieces of matter and that little cells came together and somehow you and I evolved and came to be. In 1927 we had the introduction of the Big Bang Theory which worked to erroneously prove where life began.

Now I have to say that both of these are a bunch of bologna and actually if you look into these ideas it requires far more faith to believe in these two theories than it does to simply acknowledge that God created and that He is over all.

I like to think about the wonder of Creation and one thing I appreciate is the variety that we find in the world. Think of the variety of flowers that exist and the different smells that are found in the flowers and then if you think about the human body and you start to study it just a little you really can't come to any other conclusion except for the fact that you and I have a Creator and that the Creator is incredible indeed.

Before I went on the missions field I used to work in the Healthcare industry for some eye doctors and so just doing a quick search on the wonders of eyesight we can learn that you and I have around 130 million light sensitive rods and cones in our eyes that rapidly adjust to different amounts of light in the room...You have probably noticed when you first turn out the light when you are going to bed that you can't see a thing but then those little receptors called rods become activated and as they adjust you can see more at night. The lens of your eye which is behind the cornea actually help focus the images we see and as it does so it changes shape...Why do we have two eyes and not one? Well two eyes helps us to be able to have depth perception. And then to top all that off we actually have little eye ball

protectors in our eyelids and lashes that help lubricate the eye and keep foreign objects from entering our eyes.

Now if you are going to tell me that you and I were blobs of goo and then we evolved to become what we have before us today I am going to tell you that what you are saying is just plain foolish. There is no way in the world that you and I could just by chance evolve over millions of years or whatever it is they say anymore.

And that doesn't even begin to cover the vast and incredible glory of God's creation. You might even think about the incredible process of the water cycle that keeps the earth properly watered or what about photosynthesis that the plants go through or what about how amazing and diverse the languages of the world are or even the different seasons that we see each year...and then to top all that off consider that you and I just so happen to be on a place called earth and this little round globe we are on is approximately 93 million miles away from this huge star that is called the sun...and science says that if the earth was just 1.5 million miles closer to the sun that it is now...that life would cease to exist...that is just a 1% reduction in closeness to the sun.

Over in Psalm 19:1 the Bible says **The heavens declare the glory of God; And the firmament shows His handiwork.** And in Proverbs 20:12 the Word says **The hearing ear and the seeing eye, The Lord has made them both.**

As we think about creation and the simple fact that there is a God we might ask why is it that so many reject that God exists? I believe that the moment a person acknowledges that there is a God then it also implies He is the authority and we are not the authority and that

means that He is the One that has set the boundaries of humanity and He is the One that has said that which is right and wrong and when that is the case it means that we are accountable to Him.

And so because humanity is full of sin, because people refuse to bow the knee to God Almighty Our Creator is rightfully full of wrath.

And because of all this Paul says that their foolish hearts became darkened. Sadly this is the way a life will go that chooses to ignore God and I can tell you that first hand. As I rejected Jesus as I chose to go my own way my life went down a dark path...My mind became futile.

Look with me at verses 22-25 ²²Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. ²⁴Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

As man rejects God something happens in the mind and heart of that person. The heart grows hard to the things of God and as a person looks to justify themselves and they become more and more hard to the truth that person begins to replace the One true God with all kinds of false Gods and this was a huge problem in the Roman empire.

When Paul came to the city of Athens over in Acts 17:16 this is what he observed. It says ¹⁶**Now while Paul waited for them at Athens, his spirit was provoked within him when he saw that the**

city was given over to idols. In the ancient world and in many societies today the worship of false gods is rampant. If you look at different Biblical research books and you just look into it there was almost a God for everything under the sun. The ancients worshipped the sun, they worshipped the animal kingdom, they worshipped the so called demi-gods by the names of Hercules and Zeus and as they did so their lives become further and further from the truth.

The truth is that there is One God and One God alone. The God of the Bible sits on high. He scoffs at the idols of man. I love what the Word of God says about idols and false gods over in Psalm 115:3-8 we see this about false gods when it says **But our God is in heaven; He does whatever He pleases. ⁴Their idols are silver and gold, The work of men's hands. ⁵They have mouths, but they do not speak; Eyes they have, but they do not see; ⁶They have ears, but they do not hear; Noses they have, but they do not smell; ⁷They have hands, but they do not handle; Feet they have, but they do not walk; Nor do they mutter through their throat. ⁸Those who make them are like them; So is everyone who trusts in them.**

Humanity was created to worship. It is in the very depths of our hearts and as man turns from our true Creator we find that the worship of false gods takes its place. Even today you and I in our country have false gods that people worship...the god of money, the god of popularity, the god of political victories...In a world full of idolatry we are called to be different, to live our lives unto the One true God.

Now before we move on here I have one last brief point to show you...You might look at verse 24 and you might just underline the words God also gave them up...and then look at verse 26 and you see

that it says For this reason God gave them up...and then look at verse 28 where we see For this reason God gave them over.

As you and I and all of humanity go through life we are always given a certain amount of light in our hearts to the truth of God...Whether it be through the witness of creation that surrounds us, or the witness of our conscience which is built into us telling us what is right and what is wrong, or whether it might be from an individual that testifies to the truth of Jesus...and if you and I begin to suppress and press down that truth that is revealed to us what will happen is the Lord will contend with us for a time in our hearts...but there does come a day that God will allow our hearts to become hardened...It is as if God says “You have free will, you are choosing repeatedly to deny my work in your heart, therefore I am going to allow you to go the way your heart is choosing.”

This is perhaps a little hard to grab hold of but I think we see this in action in the book of Exodus as Moses was before Pharaoh and the plagues were coming upon the land and as the first few took place the text says that Pharaoh hardened his heart meaning he made a choice to deny what God wanted to do...and then when the sixth plague came which was when boils broke out on the people of Egypt we are told something different...The text says that the LORD hardened Pharaoh's heart.

I think the warning for you and I today is not to harden our hearts, not to walk away from the God who created all things and listen if you are here today and you don't know Jesus you just need to know that He is the way, the truth and the life and that no one comes to the Father but through Him and that Jesus alone is the One that forgives us of our

sins. You have an opportunity today to give your life to the Lord, to heed His work and His testimony to your heart...Don't have the idea that you will do it tomorrow or next year or when you get things right in your heart for you don't know if you have tomorrow or not. Be very careful...for rejecting Jesus as He works in your heart will lead to futile thinking, sinful activity and a downward spiral.

Now verses 26-27 are probably some of the most contested verses in the country that we live in today if you read those with me they say

²⁶ For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷ Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

As humanity rejects God there are penalties and you are going to see from here to the end of the chapter that humanity is given up not only to idolatry and sexual sin but to all kinds of other sinful activity as well.

We might ask why do we have these two verses by themselves and then all the other verses given to us with all the other sins society finds afterwards? I think that's a good question.

And I think we should understand that culturally the Roman empire was filled with idols and it was filled with sexual immorality. If you do some research you will find very quickly that most of the emperors of Rome regularly practiced homosexuality or bisexuality...This of course bled over into society...So this was a major social issue of the day and

age that Paul wrote the book of Romans thus Paul gives special attention to it.

I want to be clear this morning that God from the very beginning said this in Genesis 1:27 when we see this ²⁷**So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.** Our Creator God made two genders and two alone and they are male and female and the simple reality is that Adam had no choice in the matter and Eve had no choice in the matter God in His authority made them as He desired.

Furthermore in Genesis 2:24 we see God bringing the woman to the man and saying this as the first marriage took place...God said ²⁴**Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**

The standards of the Bible and our Creator are very clear in that God created a genetic man and a genetic woman to be in a monogamous marriage covenant. Anything outside of this is simply sinful.

I can tell you that the scriptures are clear that Jesus loves the entire world...but He also says that we are to go and sin no more and so God is clear in His Word that all homosexuality and sex outside of marriage is wrong, it is sinful and it does carry with it penalties and you can see that in the form of sexually transmitted diseases, suicide rates and so much more.

I would say to the LGBTQ+ community today that God loves you so very much that He went to the cross for your sins and that you as you recognize the love of God and turn from that sinfulness and embrace

the love of God will find that He will set you free and do an amazing work in your heart.

You can be set free, you can find the community that you so desperately desire in the church, you can be changed in your sexual preferences as you submit to what Jesus says in His Word. The Bible is clear that all sexual activity outside of marriage as defined in the Bible is sinful, it is wrong, and it must be turned away from.

1 Corinthians 6:18 says ¹⁸**Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.**

It's a sad day indeed that we live in as our society has been given over to sexual perversions of all kinds...It is simply a result of denying our Creator. Churches everywhere must love those who are part of the LGBTQ+ community but we also must stand in truth refusing to compromise on what the Bible says about homosexuality and sexual immorality.

Society will and does hate us when we choose to live biblically...we should expect it...if our country does not repent and change directions I expect that persecution will become greater and greater for those churches and believers that stand on the truth of what God says on this topic.

Now not only is humanity given over to sexual sin but look at the rest of the chapter with me in verses 28-32 which say ²⁸**And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;** ²⁹ **being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality,**

wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; *they are* whisperers, ³⁰ backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; ³² who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

I want to be clear that I am not picking on those who live in sexual sin contrary to what God's Word says about marriage Notice verse 32 which says that those who practice any of the above things are deserving of death...and that is referring not to taking people out and stoning them and killing them physically but the simply reality that because of sin you and I are spiritually dead and because of our sin we do deserve eternal damnation. Romans 6:23 says ²³For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

We deserve death for our sin but Jesus gives us life as a free gift if we will simply accept what Jesus has done for us on the cross. Will you do that today in your life? Will you accept Jesus Christ? Will you turn from your sin? If today you need to do that you will have the opportunity to do so in just a few moments.

In closing today I wanted to take a few moments and build on a statement I made last week as we closed. I mentioned that in our study this week we were going to be looking at the reason that our society today is so broken.

I believe that this passage of scripture gives us some answers. Our country today has rejected our Creator and in doing so we have rejected what God's Word says.

If you look at society and you compare its behaviors and attitudes with what God has said in the book of Genesis you will see that our culture and our enemy the devil are constantly challenging what God has said. And that's really the trick the enemy has used from the beginning. When Satan first tempted Eve in the garden what was it he said? He said "Has God Really Said?" And then he went on to challenge the authority of God's Word in the eating of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

This world and the ruler of this world Satan are always looking to corrupt God's Word and cause man to disregard it. Today our society challenges the facts of Genesis. The world challenges The Word of God by saying God is not the Creator but it all came about by chance, That God did not create them male and female, that proper marriage is not only found between a genetic man and a genetic woman, that man should not multiply upon the earth, and that man must allow all other created things to be equal to himself. I am sure that is not a comprehensive list.

My point is that our society challenges the God of the Bible on all sides...and today people are asking what is wrong with our society? I mean just look at our country and you can see we are confused, we are not in unity, we have all kinds of different ideals and thoughts...And I want to tell you today that the answer is not found by being more political, the answer is not found in violence or by making things happen by force.

Instead we will find a country full of joy and full of blessings when we choose to return to the truth of the Bible and we submit to the Lordship of Jesus Christ. We should pray for revival within our nation, we should pray that the church as a whole would return to God's Word, we should pray that the lies of Satan would be exposed and walked away from, we should pray for our leaders that they would govern with godly Biblical principles giving their hearts and lives to Jesus, we should pray that we as a church here today would rise up and walk in truth building our lives on Christ.

I would remind you of one more truth that is found over in Matthew 7:13-14 which says the following ¹³“**Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. ¹⁴Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.**

The way of God is narrow, I don't think it will be easy for those of us that choose to honor Jesus...But I am reminded that 12 men who loved Jesus with all their heart were filled with the Holy Spirit and empowered to go out and share their faith and the result was that these men turned the whole world upside down seeing multitudes upon multitudes of people coming to know Jesus.

May that be the case in our church and in our lives...may we pray that God would bring the broken and the hurting right here to our church and as people hear the Word of God may we see a great turning of hearts to the Lord Jesus. Let it be so Lord.

Well we will close there today and we are going to take communion together and you know if you are here today and there is just a stirring

in your heart to seek the Lord and to draw near to Him I want to encourage you as we worship to just confess that to Jesus and ask Him to work in your heart.

Communion to be clear is for believers in Jesus Christ, for those that have placed their faith and trust in the One that died for them and if today you can say with all confidence that you have accepted and believe in Jesus then please join us in taking communion.

Let's pray and the ushers can go ahead and grab the elements.

Romans 1:16-32 “Why The World Is Upside Down”

Verse 16

Ephesians 2:8-9

Romans 9:3-5

Deuteronomy 7:6

Verse 18

Genesis 6:5

Verses 19-21

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Proverbs 20:12

Verses 22-25

Acts 17:16

Psalms 115:3-8

Verses 26-27

Genesis 1:27

Genesis 2:24

1 Corinthians 6:18

Verses 28-32

Romans 6:23

Matthew 7:13-14