

Romans 1:22-2:1 - The Same Boat

ROMANS SERMON #5

October 1, 2017

We are continuing in Romans chapter 1 today.

And this section is part of a walk through some of the dark and hard parts of this book. And there is a reason for the hard to hear smack-down passages. (Like chapters 1-3 of Romans.)

There are two big tools that God uses to bring us to Jesus or keep us near Him - the law and the gospel. The law of God - God's commands about what we should and shouldn't do, shows us how far we fall short. It guides our lives, but none of us follow it's guidance well. So we get the sentence that comes with breaking the law: the wrath of God - punishment and hell. The law points out our guilt and our judgment.

But the second tool is the Gospel. The Gospel says all of the commands were kept for us, the wrath was absorbed for us by Jesus, and if we'll open the empty hand of faith to Him we'll be forgiven. All of His obedience to the law becomes ours, all of our disobedience was nailed to the cross.

Which is incredible love. That's the root of our faith - we are condemned by the law but saved by Jesus. Guilty, but Grace goes farther than our guilt. Simultaneously sinful and justified.

John Newton, the writer of the song, *Amazing Grace*, who was a former slave trader, said "Although my memory is fading, I remember two things very clearly: I am a great sinner and Christ is a great Savior."¹

¹ John Pollock, *Amazing Grace: John Newton's Story* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 182.

And we need the law as that strict teacher to show us our great Savior and drive us to the grace of Christ. The law exposes us and levels us.

And in this section of Romans, Paul, it's author, is leveling everybody. He is going to show that gentiles and jews, irreligious people and moralists, are all in a desperate situation and desperately in need of a Savior.

He is going to prove that nobody is righteous on their own, all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, in Romans 3 he'll say it will stop every mouth - all of our self-justification, all of our excuse making, all of our thinking we're better than others, all of our saying that they are worse than we are somehow, will all be silenced by this section of scripture. It pronounces all of us guilty, and outside of Christ facing the wrath of God.

And this is so that Christianity can't possibly be a faith that gives us reason to boast over anybody else. ² Religion can be a dangerous thing, it can give us a reason for feeling superior, like we "get it", like we're smarter, like we are the life giving informed and righteous ones and everybody else is a foolish sinful annoyance that we don't have time or patience for.

And Paul has to make clear to our hearts that love to get a leg up on others that there is no leg up, there is no superiority, we are all in the same guilty boat, and the only hero in this story is Jesus.

And that's a great outcome - faith in Christ, salvation, unity, love, humility.

But getting there is uncomfortable for everybody. We love the effects of the surgery, but to get them we have to go under the knife. We have to allow the Bible to say about us what is true even when it's hard, uncool, and uncomfortable.

² See Romans 2:23, 3:27

Which is what it means to have a Bible. It isn't a book we stand in judgment over to determine if it is acceptable to us, it is a book that stands over us, judges us, corrects us, and refines us. And if we really have a Bible that is not of our own making, that is really from God, we should all expect that repeatedly throughout our lives it will contradict us.

If this is God's word we would expect that we might be getting some things right, where our lives and thoughts are already aligned with it, areas that won't need to change at all. But if it isn't a book of our making, we'd expect some areas of our lives and thought that contradict it and need to be changed.

We would expect that in every culture, every time and place, and every heart that receives Christ. If it is God's word there will be a number of ways it isn't popular or comfortable. But it is the canon, a word that means the rule or measuring rod. It measures us.

Which means if we're honestly reading the scriptures, there should be a number of times our minds are changed by them, a number of ways the Bible is teaching against the stream of our culture, a number of ways the Bible doesn't line up with my politics, with my life goals, with how I spend my time and money, a number of very hard teachings for all of us.

And in all of those situations, we have the opportunity to see our failures and run to Christ, to be humbled, and to learn to deny ourselves and follow Christ.

And I don't think there is a harder passage to be faithful to and preach faithfully in our day than Romans chapter 1. (Romans 9 will give it a run for its money - both are very offensive today because both assault our autonomy and self-determination - but more on that in the spring.)

So in the passage last week, Paul laid out his premise that God's wrath, God's judicial anger and punishment for sin, is being revealed against our ungodliness and unrighteousness. But that wrath, until He returns, doesn't look like God intervening with fire and lightning. Instead, it looks like God giving people up - allowing them to do the things they want to do and have what they want to have and reap the consequences individually and as a society. It is God saying, "thy will be done" to us. That's its own punishment.

John Zeisler writes, wrath "*operates not by God's intervention but precisely by his not intervening, by letting men and women go their own way.*"³ God withdraws His restraint and lets us go the way we have chosen. He lets us have exactly what we want after a time of rejecting Him as our God.

And we see the results of exchanging God for other ultimates in all of our lives.

And today's passage is going to be hard to hear. It is a list of the sins that show up in our lives as a result of our idolatry - as a result of our answering to a different god, one we made up.

And it's important as we read to remember that we are all in this list. This passage is given to level everybody and help us see that we're all in the same boat. It's a passage that has been used as a club against certain people in certain lifestyles with certain sins, but the point of the passage is to level all of us. If we come out still standing, we read it wrong.

Romans 1:22-2:1 "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they

³ Quoted in John Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity, 1994). 75.

exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. 28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. 2:1 Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.

So the pattern in this passage is that we exchange God for something else, and that wrong view of God leads to sin in us.

*Idolatry always leads to immorality.*⁴ (as Stott says)

And when we read this passage as a whole, with this whole list, the point is not to single out one type of sin over another as a really bad one. It's not to give us a way to single out the bad guys so we can feel superior. The point is

⁴ John Stott, *The Message of Romans* (Downer's Grove: Intervarsity, 1994). 76.

not to make some worse than others. We are all in this list naturally. Our lives, all of them, give evidence of idolatry.

So let's break down some of the ways our lives reflect our exchange of God for some other god:

Romans 1:22-1:25 "Claiming to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.

So the first way we give evidence that we've exchanged God is that we have been given over to impurity, to sexual uncleanness.

Now when the Bible talks about sex that is clean, that is undefiled, it is talking about sex inside of marriage:

Hebrews 13:4 Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled, for God will judge the sexually immoral and adulterous.

The marriage bed is undefiled - God has designed sex as a gift to be enjoyed with no guilt, no impurity associated with it, in the marriage bed. Sex is an act of being naked and unashamed with your spouse. It is saying with your body, "I'm keeping nothing back from you." It's making yourself increasingly vulnerable and trusting.

If you take it outside of that commitment, it works in reverse. It causes you to not trust like you should. To believe this person only wants what they can

get from me, they won't give themselves to me fully. It makes you, not closer, but lonelier when practiced outside of the covenant bonds.

The sexual union of a husband and wife is designed by God as a unifying force. And sex is a way of continually renewing the marriage covenant - every time you come together with your spouse, it's something of a vow renewal ceremony..

It isn't a dirty thing, but a sacred, powerful thing.

But if we give ourselves to someone physically without giving them our full commitment, our future, our hopes, our dreams, all that we have, our legal status, our allegiance - we are lying to them. We are saying one thing with our bodies and another with our lives.

To have sex outside of that covenant makes it a lie, and makes it unclean. It becomes an act of getting something out of someone as opposed to giving everything to someone.

That's why sex is reserved only for marriage and only called clean there.

Now it can seem like breaking it out of those puritanical bounds would be liberating and allow us to be our true and full selves, and experience more of what life has to offer. The prevailing god of this world, the god of pleasure, would certainly tell us that's how to live.

But The Lord knows what is best, He can see the end from the beginning, He knows better than we do where true freedom is. And when He gives us up to do whatever we want to do, in the long run, it looks like wrath and disintegration, not freedom and joy.

This was clear in the life of Hugh Hefner who died this week. There was an obituary, of sorts, in the NY Times yesterday, describing the life of this man who represented freedom from the biblical confines of sexuality. I couldn't possibly read it all in church, but it captured the creeping wrath that freedom from God's design for sex really is:

"Hef was the grinning pimp of the sexual revolution, with quaaludes for the ladies and Viagra for himself — a father of smut addictions and eating disorders, abortions and divorce and syphilis, a pretentious huckster who published Updike stories no one read while doing flesh procurement for celebrities, a revolutionary whose revolution chiefly benefited men much like himself.

The arc of his life vindicated his moral critics, conservative and feminist: What began with talk of jazz and Picasso and other signifiers of good taste ended in a sleazy decrepitude that would have been pitiable if it wasn't still so exploitative."⁵(Ross Douthat, pronounced Doo-tat).

And while we don't know whether he repented and believed the Gospel in his last hours, his life was a testimony to the dark exchange⁶ of the truth of God for a lie and the wrath that comes as a result.

But in case we can think that we can point a finger at Hefner like he's worse than us, the point of this passage is that our lives by nature are also a testimony to what happens when we trade God for something else.

And we're almost all messed up in the category of sexual purity.

⁵ Douthat, Ross. "Speaking Ill of Hugh Hefner." nytimes.com. (accessed 9/30/2017). <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/30/opinion/hugh-hefner.html>

⁶ Piper, John. "The Other Dark Exchange: Homosexuality." desiringgod.org (accessed 9/30/2017). <http://www.desiringgod.org/messages/the-other-dark-exchange-homosexuality-part-1>

This is important because we know that in the next section Paul is going to talk about homosexuality, and Christians have typically gravitated toward that passage so we could point the finger of judgment at others. So we can feel superior and feel like we got out of Romans 1 scott free like we're the good guys in this story.

But he hasn't mentioned homosexuality *at all* yet, and the point of this whole passage is not that we would learn to identify "the other" but so we could all see ourselves in this list.

Sexual immorality of all kinds is an indicator of idolatry in all of our lives.

So heterosexuals who live together before marriage, sleep together before marriage, who use pornography, who allow our minds to drift toward thoughts of someone we aren't married to, who feed lusts without a struggle, who commit adultery, are giving evidence that things are not right with God.

When there is no struggle, we are indicating that whoever our god is has no problem with how we're living. We've exchanged God for a god that says what we want to hear about sex.

Now you might say, "This is my struggle, I struggle with lust and failures in these categories, there may even be more defeat than victory. So does that mean I'm not right with God?"

Romans 7 describes the Christian life as a life of struggle.

Romans 7:15-19 "For I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. 16 Now if I do what I do not want, I agree with the law, that it is good. 17 So now it is no longer I who do it, but sin that dwells within me. 18 For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh. For I have

**the desire to do what is right, but not the ability to carry it out. 19
For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I
keep on doing.”**

This describes my life pretty well, in all kinds of categories. Wanting to do good but not doing it. This struggle is the Christian struggle!

We make a big mistake when we say the struggle is a sin. When we say that those who fall and repent are in a wrong relationship with God. We're probably almost all oriented to some kind of sexual sin. Inclinations and temptations are present realities in the Christian life.

The really fearful place is to not be struggling - to be outright sinning and not caring about it at all.

But when we say perpetually, "I'm tempted, I want to do this, so I am going to do this and it's ok." We're essentially saying "the god I worship doesn't have a problem with this."

Practicing the acts with no struggle, no repentance, making peace with that behavior is a very bad place to be. Struggling is what all Christians do, it's making peace with sinful acts that isn't Christian.

And the struggle will be different for everyone:

For some that struggle will be desire that can't righteously be fulfilled because you're not married and want to be.

For some that struggle will be difficulties in marriage.

For some that struggle will come because you can't righteously marry right now (you're separated, or divorced under circumstances that wouldn't allow you to remarry.)

For some it will mean never having what our culture would call sexual fulfillment.

For all it will mean embracing a degree of suffering - of not having all you want.

The life of following Christ is a life where, in pursuit of Christ, we deny ourselves some of our desires, even some of what the world around us calls necessities for the good life.

Matthew 16:24-25 "24 Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. 25 For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it."

The Christian life is a life of embracing some loss, some suffering, some struggle because we are following a suffering savior. For many this will mean learning to embrace a life or a season of life without sexual fulfillment, with unfulfillable longings, a life of struggle.

But as a church, we are a place for strugglers. A place where people who can't righteously be having sex right now can find friends, and community, and other non-romantic forms of closeness and intimacy, and people to help them when they fall. People to remind them that the hope of sexual fulfillment is a tiny hope compared to what we have in Christ. That the ultimate intimacy we were all made for isn't sexual, but intimacy with Christ.

And when we see Him, there will be no more sex⁷ (it's a temporary arrangement for this life), and that won't be a loss at all - there will be a greater pleasure than sexual pleasure in closeness with Christ. Sex is a huffy dirtbike compared to the lamborghini of seeing Jesus face to face. We are

⁷ See Matthew 22:23-33, where Jesus explains that there is no marriage in the resurrection.

complete in Christ even though our culture tells us that without sex we are totally incomplete. The married aren't superior or more "the church" than the unmarried. Sex is good, but not God. And when we make it God and god gives us over to that god, it just descends into what Douthat calls "sleazy decrepitude".

Our God says very different things about sex than the world around us does, and how we treat sex is an indicator of the god we worship.

26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.

So in this section, Paul does call homosexual acts sin. It is important to see that in this he is not calling an orientation a sin, or temptation or struggle a sin. We are all strugglers. But he does call the "acts" sinful (in verse 27). This is consistent with the teaching on sexuality in the rest of the Bible.

Now there is some debate about whether that's what Paul means here. But it seems that an honest look at all of the biblical texts on sexuality does lead to the conclusion that marriage and sexuality is for a man and a woman.

I want to quote a little bit from a book called Single Gay Christian by Greg Coles. This book was published this year, it was endorsed by DA Carson and has received national acclaim. Greg has been here to Grace Road, his sister Laura is part of our church. And I don't want to imply that Greg would endorse everything I will say in this sermon, but having read his book I deeply admire his struggle and his conclusions.

Greg is gay and says despite attempts, he has been unable to be attracted to women.⁸ So as a Christian, he set about to study the scriptures and be completely submitted to the Lordship of Jesus, whatever that will mean for him.

These are Greg's conclusions about what Paul means in Romans 1, and I agree with them, though it doesn't cost me as much to come to these conclusions as it does Greg, which I think makes his honest pursuit of the truth brave and admirable:

"Paul might have had a specific cultural moment in mind in Romans 1, but his language is much broader than that, stretching to include all homosexual behavior. The compound word arsenokoitai, the word sometimes translated "homosexuals," which appears in 1 Corinthians 6 and 1 Timothy 1, mimics the phrasing of the Septuagint, a Greek translation of the Old Testament that was being circulated in Paul's day. The Septuagint's rendering of the prohibitions in Leviticus 18 and 20 uses the terms arsen and koite, the same terms from which Paul coins his new word, even though there are more common terms for both maleness and sexual activity. Assuming Paul's word choice is strategic, it's nearly certain that Paul meant to reaffirm the sinfulness of same-sex behavior outlined in Leviticus."⁹

So Old Testament and New Testament prohibit homosexual acts. But rather than be discouraged by this, Greg found some encouraging guidance in this passage:

"So then, Jesus knew me after all. He hadn't forgotten me. He had known what I would want, how urgently I would want it, how it would seem at times to overtake every thought. And he had responded that the desires I

⁸ Gregory Coles, *Single Gay Christian* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2017). 95.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 41

had weren't meant to be fulfilled. Not in this life. He had called me to self-denial, to sorrow."¹⁰

Later he writes, "Once you find yourself in the place I've found myself - unconvinced by revisionary theology on homosexuality, unable to conjure even the slightest heterosexual desire, unwilling to marry a woman you can't desire sexually - there's no need to keep wondering about marriage. Instead you can spend your time figuring out what it means to embrace a calling of celibacy" (SGC 95).

Wow. Now in our culture, where pleasure is God and sex is the chief sacrament, this sounds awful - it seems we are saying a person can't be fully who they are. And this seems like such an affront - that the greatest possible pleasure can't be had by some.

But again, Greg says:

*"The calling of gay celibacy is a calling to longing. It's an admission that our deepest sexual desires can wait for another world, for another life, for another kind of fulfillment. But a life of longing isn't a life without happiness. On the contrary, it's a life rich with detail, alive with wonder and beauty. It's when I am happiest that I long most. And someday, when I look into the face of my Savior, I will taste the fulfillment of an intimacy a thousand times sweeter than any pale earthly imitation."*¹¹

He says, "There is a kind of love that I've forsworn, and it's a real denial, a painful one. But I've received a hundred kinds of love in its place. It seems selfish asking for pity when I'm so unspeakably rich."¹²

¹⁰ Gregory Coles, *Single Gay Christian* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2017). 41.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 98.

¹² *Ibid.*, 89.

Christ calls us to sacrifice. But Christ Himself is infinitely better than all sacrifices. And for those who share Greg's struggle, we want our church to be a place where they can struggle and find lots of support as they follow in his steps.

Christians have made the mistake of saying we welcome and love people who are tempted toward heterosexual sin to be part of the church community, part of the community of strugglers. But someone who is tempted to commit homosexual acts somehow isn't as welcome. We say temptation isn't a sin if its heterosexual but we make temptation itself a sin if is homosexual. Which is to miss the point of this whole section.

Because, again, following Jesus in this category: For all will mean embracing a degree of suffering and struggle.

And as a church, we are a place for strugglers. A place where people who can't righteously be having sex right now can find friends, and community, and people to help them when they fall.

A place where strugglers can say it's "*a real denial, a painful one. But I've received a hundred kinds of love in its place.*"¹³

People to remind them that the hope of sexual fulfillment is a tiny hope compared to what we have in Christ. That the ultimate intimacy we were all made for isn't sexual, but intimacy with Christ.

We should be a place where all strugglers are welcome.

So our God says very different things about sex than the world around us does, and how we treat sex is an indicator of the god we worship.

¹³ Gregory Coles, *Single Gay Christian* (Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 2017). 89.

If it's comfort and pleasure and popularity and acceptance by the culture, we will treat sex differently than if our God is Christ.

And remember, what unifies us with these strugglers is to see ourselves in the same list. And let's say you've made it through the gauntlet so far and you can say none of this is talking about me. You won't make it through the next part.

Because Paul gives a list of 21 vices.

And we won't go through and define each one - that would be like anesthesia - but I do want to try to do what this passage is doing, which is show us all that we're in this list, that we're in the same boat. There isn't the bad guy to point a finger at without realizing all of our mouths are stopped by this.

Paul is going to show all of us that think we have kept the standards that we haven't. He's going to show that we're all the Emperor with no clothes, even though we might be patting ourselves on the back like we're better than everyone else. And it's only after we are stripped of our ability to convince ourselves we are OK that we can be really clothed with Jesus's righteousness. The law needs to do its work to lead us to the Gospel.

28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. 29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness, They are gossips, 30 slanderers,

So he puts in this same list with sexual sins "covetousness" and "envy".

Over-desire for what people have. We exchange Gods glory for a lesser glory and we're preoccupied that others have more than us: more good looks, more popularity, more ease, more connections.

And when we aren't able to rejoice that others have more, we envy and we're consumed by it. And James says it causes wars among us.

Those wars probably look like some of the other sins in this list:

Deceit, maliciousness, Gossip, and slander

We lie, we attack, we back-bite, we give each other a bad name, we are climbing to get to the top because we worship the GOD OF SELF and God says you can have it. It goes badly.

Lewis wrote, "*Picture hell as a state where everyone is perpetually concerned about his own dignity & advancement, where everyone has a grievance...*"¹⁴

haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil,

We want to be our own gods, so we mockingly hate god, we're proud, we boast about ourselves instead of praising him. Celebrating the self when the One true survivor who conquered death is ignored.

disobedient to parents,³¹ foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

32 Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. 2:1 Therefore you have no excuse, O man, every one of you who judges. For in passing judgment on another you condemn yourself, because you, the judge, practice the very same things.

¹⁴ C. S. Lewis, *The Screwtape Letters*.

So he levels us all. We not only sin ourselves, but celebrate and encourage it in others. And while we may try to pass judgment on others, we practice the very same things. We break the same law they break. They may break it in different ways, but the end result is we all break it, we all deserve wrath. We're all in the same boat.

And all of us, because we sin against a perfectly holy God, deserve death.

We're all leveled.

Law does this. It kills. It condemns. It exposes. It shames.

And we might say, "But obviously God has set aside his death penalty for these things."

No He hasn't.

He inflicted it.

On Christ.

For all who would believe, He became this list. He became it all and died on the cross and took the death penalty for us.

"Every time we look at the cross Christ seems to say to us, 'I am here because of you. It is your sin I am bearing, your curse I am suffering, your debt I am paying, your death I am dying.' Nothing in history or in the universe cuts us down to size like the cross. All of us have inflated views of ourselves, especially in self-righteousness, until we have visited a place called Calvary. It is there, at the foot of the cross, that we shrink to our true size."¹⁵

¹⁵ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Galatians* (Leicester, Intervarsity, 1968), 179.

And when we realize that we are all in this list, all worthy of death, that the penalty still stands and the rules are still binding, but that Jesus stepped into our place, it makes us people who, far from hating people in other sin categories, love them more:

I'd like to close by reading this story from Luke's gospel:

Luke 7:36-50 "One of the Pharisees asked him to eat with him, and he went into the Pharisee's house and reclined at table. 37 And behold, a woman of the city, who was a sinner, when she learned that he was reclining at table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of ointment, 38 and standing behind him at his feet, weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head and kissed his feet and anointed them with the ointment. 39 Now when the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, "If this man were ya prophet, he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him, for she is a sinner." 40 And Jesus answering said to him, "Simon, I have something to say to you." And he answered, "Say it, Teacher." 41 "A certain moneylender had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. 42 When they could not pay, he cancelled the debt of both. Now which of them will love him more?" 43 Simon answered, "The one, I suppose, for whom he cancelled the larger debt." And he said to him, "You have judged rightly." 44 Then turning toward the woman he said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but eshe has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. 45 You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. 46 You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. 47 Therefore I tell you,

her sins, which are many, are forgiven—for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little.” 48 And he said to her, “Your sins are forgiven.” 49 Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, “Who is this, who even forgives sins?” 50 And he said to the woman, “Your faith has saved you; go in peace.”

Levelled, the only place to go is to the feet of Jesus. And when we ask, “Who is this that forgives sins?,” the answer is that He is the only righteous one ever, the only perfect person, the only acceptable sacrifice, and He was put to death for us on Calvary.

And here up front He has invited us to a meal.

We come to the Lord’s supper *foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.*

And he gives us his body and blood, torn for us. We bring our tears, our shame, our regret, our confession. And He brings His grace.

So as we sing the next couple of songs, all those who have confessed and renounced sin and trusted in Christ are invited to this table with us.

Bulletin Notes:

The Same Boat
Romans 1:22-2:1

I. Idolatry and Immorality (1:22-28)

II. Idolatry and Vice (1:29-31)

III. The Penalty Inflicted (1:32-2:1)

Questions for Small Group Discussion:

1. Discuss the phrase "idolatry leads to immorality."
2. Why is sex a gift to be enjoyed only in marriage?
3. In what ways do we try to get a "leg up" on others by believing our sins are less severe?
4. What is the difference between struggling with a sin and making peace with one?
5. Discuss the ways sins destroy individuals and society.