

Romans Chapter 1G

A week ago I sent out a prayer request asking you to pray for the Pa Family Institute's lawsuit against the Boyertown School District regarding a student's right to privacy in a school locker room or rest room facility. (Reached Supreme Court)

- At the heart of this lawsuit is the redefinition of gender that has taken place over the past 15 (*or so*) years.
- Many of us grew up with the understanding that one's gender was determined strictly by the combination of X or Y chromosomes that are present at conception.
- But today gender and sex are no longer viewed as equivalent terms.

Instead of being seen as a strictly binary issue, Gender is now considered to be a spectrum that goes beyond physicality to include identity and expression. Sitting in the School Board meeting where the issue of privacy for our children was being decided I asked myself, "HOW in the world did we get HERE?"

2019 marks 45 years since I graduated from High School. To me it doesn't seem that long, but Oh how things have changed!

- I remember when College dormitories were strictly segregated by gender.
- Today you can't promise your Pre-Teen Daughter that she won't encounter a biological male in the middle school bathroom. (How is that right?)
- (Another Front) I was raised in a home that recognized the value of a hard day's work. As a matter of fact, I held my first job at the age of 12 and worked for 50 cents an hour at the local drug store. If this Green New Deal that is before congress passes, anyone who doesn't want to work won't have to.

How can the minds and morals of an entire society degenerate so rapidly? How can seemingly intelligent people be given over to the irrational thinking and unnatural behaviors that are so prevalent in today's culture?

- Reading through the first chapter in the book of Romans, while observing the swift decline of our society IT becomes obvious that we are experiencing the effects of God's just and holy wrath on western society.
- Let's take a minute to remember what we studied last week.

IN Romans 1:17-18 there are two things that Paul says are presently being revealed.

- First, through the proclamation of the Gospel, (the gift of righteousness from God) **is being revealed** (present tense) **from faith for faith**.
 - The Eternal and Holy God in his unfathomable grace has made a way for sinful men to be reconciled through faith in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
- Secondly, Paul tells us that, the wrath of God (Vs 18) is being revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth.

Every week we gather together to celebrate this wonderful salvation and to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.

- But if we were to be perfectly honest, many of us think of the Wrath of God as something that only takes place at the end of the age.

Here in Romans 1:18-32, Paul explains WHY the wrath of God is presently being revealed. And then he moves on to describe HOW that wrath is revealed.

- You could consider WHY and HOW the 2 Main points of today's sermon.
- Last week in our study of verses 18-20 we began to answer the question WHY the wrath of God comes upon men; let's refresh our memories.

Romans 1:19 **For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them.** ("Them" would be the unbelieving population, those who holds the truth in unrighteousness.) *Paul goes on to say: For God's invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse.*

- Paul tells us that through the creation God has clearly displayed His invisible attributes namely his eternal power and divine nature And because this revelation has been Clearly Perceived by all men they are without excuse.
- But sadly, in the depravity of his mind the natural man actively suppresses the revelation of God, He resists the truth and refuses to honor his creator.

Romans 1: 21 **For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened.**

- Man's rejection of this divine illumination has left him with a darkened soul.
- And that darkness has affected his mind and his heart. His reasoning and affections have become distorted; his judgments and his will have become corrupted.
- According to Paul the fundamental sin of man is the failure to glorify God and give him thanks.
- Now we understand from Psalm 19:1 that the primary function of the whole created universe is to glorify God.

Psalm 19: 1 **The heavens declare the glory of God, and the sky above proclaims his handiwork.** 2 **Day to day pours out speech, and night to night reveals knowledge.**

- Man, who is the crescendo, the climax of God's creative work was specifically designed in God's own image, possessing a unique ability and responsibility to glorify God.
- The framers of the Westminster Catechism understood this.

First Question in the Westminster Longer Catechism:

Q. 1. What is the primary and highest purpose of human beings?

A. The primary and highest purpose of human beings is to glorify God and to enjoy him completely forever.

Tom Schreiner *“When human beings fail to glorify God, they lose glory themselves and they are cut off from life and become corruptible.”*

- As if the suppression of truth and the failure to glorify God were not enough, man in his rebellion chose to worship the creation rather than the creator.
- Paul speaks of this unholy exchange in verse 22-23.

Romans 1:22 **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.**

- In the darkened futility of his mind and the foolish rationalization of his heart man abandoned the surpassing glory of the eternal God for the unreal, unnatural, unprofitable idols that arise out of his own darkened imagination.
- Despite the fact that worshipping and serving idols can only lead to futility and further estrangement from the true and living God men foolishly persist.
- Friends the Bible contains a plethora of evidence for the folly of idolatry. But in my humble opinion there is no better text displaying the folly of idolatry than:

Isaiah 44: 13 **The carpenter stretches a line; he marks it out with a pencil. He shapes it with planes and marks it with a compass. He shapes it into the figure of a man, with the beauty of a man, to dwell in a house. 14 He cuts down cedars, or he chooses a cypress tree or an oak and lets it grow strong among the trees of the forest. He plants a cedar and the rain nourishes it. 15 Then it becomes fuel for a man. He takes a part of it and warms himself; he kindles a fire and bakes bread. Also he makes a god and worships it; he makes it an idol and falls down before it. 16 Half of it he burns in the fire. Over the half he eats meat; he roasts it and is satisfied. Also he warms himself and says, "Aha, I am warm, I have seen the fire!" 17 And the rest of it he makes into a god, his idol, and falls down to it and worships it. He prays to it and says, "Deliver me, for you are my god!" 18 They know not, nor do they discern, for he has shut their eyes, so that they cannot see, and their hearts, so that they cannot understand. 19 No one considers, nor is there knowledge or discernment to say, "Half of it I burned in the fire; I also baked bread on its coals; I roasted meat and have eaten. Shall I make the rest of it an abomination? Shall I fall down before a block of wood?"**

- The foolishness of Idolatry is clear and yet because we live in a fallen world, filled with fears and uncertainty, the first impulse of our fallen nature is to cling to, rely on and trust in those things that are tangible.
- But Jesus reminded his Disciples that God is the one who provides food for the Birds of the air and clothing for the flowers of the field. And then He said, Aren't you more valuable than they are?

- All too often men and women spend more time worshipping the provision than they do the provider. And that my friends is Idolatry.

WHY does God pour his wrath out on fallen humanity?

- Because men have rejected the revelation of God in creation.
- Because they do not honor God or give thanks to Him.
- Because they worship and glorify the creature rather than the creator. IN the foolishness of his idolatry fallen man hugs the trees and saves the whales but He blasphemes the Divine Creator who made the trees and whales.

Now that we know WHY the wrath of God is being revealed from heaven, lets try to understand HOW His wrath is revealed.

(Under the heading of HOW we will consider 2 sub-points regarding God's Wrath)

- Righteousness
- Withdrawal

First we should understand, the Wrath of God is revealed in perfect righteousness. God is never arbitrary or capricious. His anger is always directed by his justice and his judgments are always righteous and true. We see this throughout the Bible but this morning I would like to draw your attention to the book of Revelation.

- IN the context of God's Wrath those who are found standing on the sea of glass, worshipping the Lord at the end of the age sing this song:

Revelation 15: 3 "Great and amazing are your deeds, O Lord God the Almighty! Just and true are your ways, O King of the nations! 4 Who will not fear, O Lord, and glorify your name? For you alone are holy. All nations will come and worship you, for your righteous acts have been revealed."

- And then in Ch 16 when the 3rd angel pours out the contents of his bowl the rivers & springs of water turn to blood. And this judgment initiates an outcry.

Revelation 16: 5 And I heard the angel in charge of the waters say, "Just are you, O Holy One, who is and who was, for you brought these judgments. 6 For they have shed the blood of saints and prophets, and you have given them blood to drink. It is what they deserve!"

- Even at the end, when the fullness of God's fury is being poured out on a reprobate world, the angels applaud God's holy justice.

Understanding that God's wrath is always just and true, let's move on to consider what Paul describes as the withdrawal of divine restraint from those who persist in their sin.

- Men have abandoned their creator and given themselves to the worship of idols, and now in perfect righteousness God abandons men to the folly of their ways.

This wrath of abandonment can be seen in the threefold repetition of the phrase:

- In Verse 24 Paul says, "God gave them up."

- In Verse 26 Paul writes, “God gave them up.”
- In Verse 28 We are told once again, “God gave them up.”

SO HOW IS God’s wrath being revealed? It is revealed through the withdrawal of his restraining, protective hand; allowing the consequences of men’s sin to take their inevitable and destructive course.

The original word that Paul uses “Gave them up” (PARADIDOMI) is an intense verb that speaks of handing over.

- In 1 Cor. 13:3 it speaks of handing one’s body over to be burned.
- Three times it is used of Christ giving himself up to death (Gal. 2:20, Eph. 5:2 and 25)
- It is used in a judicial sense of man being handed over to prison (Mark 1:14)
- It is used of the rebellious angels who were handed over to the pits of darkness (2 Peter 2:14)
- Well, here in Romans 1, God gives men over to the pollution of their nature; by withdrawing his providential restraints, and by allowing them to have what their hearts desire.

Think of it like a child who always wants to touch those things that their parents forbid. (Like a Cactus?) All you want to do is protect your precious baby from harm, but their curiosity pushes them to act in rebellion.

- You keep on saying no, no, no, but the child keeps persisting in his rebellion. Sooner or later, in a controlled environment you allow him touch it. (OUCH!)
- Hopefully the child is wise enough to equate his forbidden activity to the painful consequences that he encountered.

In a similar way the wrath of God that is presently being revealed is not speaking of God’s final judgment. The divine abandonment described here in Romans 1 is not eternal abandonment. As long as sinful men remain alive God provides an opportunity for repentance.

- Why even that woman, so rightly named Jezebel in the church at Thyatira who was the embodiment of idolatrous, immoral godlessness was provided an opportunity to repent.

Friends, the Biblical record tells us that this wrath of abandonment has been employed by God throughout the history of man.

Psalm 81: 8 Hear, O my people, while I admonish you! O Israel, if you would but listen to me! 9 There shall be no strange god among you; you shall not bow down to a foreign god. 10 I am the LORD your God, who brought you up out of the land of Egypt. Open your mouth wide, and I will fill it. 11 "But my people did not listen to my voice; Israel

would not submit to me. 12 So I gave them over to their stubborn hearts, to follow their own counsels. (ALSO in Judges 10:11-13)

Let's look at this phrase, "God gave them up" and study it in the larger context of Romans 1 to see how we can recognize the wrath of God in today's society.

IN an act of just and righteous judgment, those who did not honor God in Vs 21 were given over to the lusts of their flesh to dishonor their bodies in Vs 24.

Verse 21: **For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, 24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,**

- The word that Paul uses translated "Impurity" (AKATHARSIA) is a general term describing "uncleanness or filth. It carries a sexual connotation of lewdness or perversion.
- Because the lusts of their hearts were bent toward immorality, God gave them over to impurity, uncleanness and the filth that they longed for.
- And with more than a hint of poetic justice these people who dishonored God are NOW dishonoring their own bodies among themselves.

Friends, listen to me, more than any other time in recorded history a virtual plague of immorality has been released upon our world.

- The development of the internet brings the most graphic pornographic images into the hands of anyone who has a phone. At one-point teenage boys had to steal their father's magazines. But today pornography is available to everyone with the click of a mouse.
- Prime time television is packed with lust and immorality. The media has transformed public opinion by presenting Trans, Bi and Homosexual lifestyles as normal and healthy alternatives to traditional heterosexual relationships.

Can I be so bold as to say that in His wrath God has given us exactly what our hearts desired and it has corrupted our minds, confused our identity and destroyed our families.

As Paul continues to describe God's wrath, the sinful impurities of man become more specific, more easily observed in society.

Since the clear revelation of God can be found in nature, it stands to reason that Idolatry would be considered something that is "Unnatural," Right?

- So then the wrath of God that is visited upon idolatrous men and women must also be something that is considered unnatural.

Tom Schreiner *"Worshipping corruptible animals and human beings instead of the incorruptible God turns the created order upside down. In the sexual sphere the mirror image of this unnatural choice of idolatry is homosexuality."*

- Because man has exchanged the truth of God for a lie, God gives them over to another exchange. ONE unnatural exchange leads to another.

Romans 1:25 **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.** 26 **For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;**

- Just as idolatry is a violation and perversion of what God intended, so too, same sex relations are contrary to what God designed when he created man and woman.
- Friends I fully realize how controversial this subject is, yet Paul makes it abundantly clear in his description of God's wrath as you move on to Vs 27.

Romans 1:26b **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.**

- Our task today is to clearly and compassionately hold forth the message of reconciliation with God that is found in the Gospel. After all the **Gospel IS the power of God for the salvation of all who believe.**
- It is not our responsibility to Clean Up Society. We are called to proclaim good news. Many will refuse to hear it, BUT there are some who will believe!
- When I was a boy I would go fishing with my grandpop, I would catch the fish But I wouldn't clean the fish because didn't want to touch them.
- IN the same way we are called by God to be fishers of men. We have a responsibility to catch them BUT God is the one who cleans them.
- We ask God for mercy and we pray for an awakening that will bring new life to those who are dead in sin, LIKE WE were. Moving on:

In Vs. 28 Paul uses another word play to describe God's wrath of abandonment.

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.** (They did not SEE FIT to acknowledge God so God gave them up to a debased mind to do what was UNFIT!)

Here evidence of God's wrath can be seen in the debased or depraved minds of those God has given over.

- Men disapproved of retaining God in their knowledge so God turned them over (Lit) **to a disapproved Mind** which led them to commit all kinds of sins like those recorded for us in verses 29-31.

Let's come back to that list next week. For Now, as we make our way from the wrath of God to the Table of the Lord, I would like to go back and focus on those words, "**God gave them up.**"

- Let me ask, IS there any Hope for a society that God has given up?

- Is there any hope for those who exchange the truth of God for a lie?
- Is there any hope for those who exchange **natural relations for those that are contrary to nature?**
- Is there any hope for the envious, the gossips, the insolent, the boastful and disobedient?
- IS there any hope for the one who has been given over to the wrath of God?

Sadly the answer is NO, None of those who insist on their rebellion, who continue to live in unrepentant sin will ever escape the present or eternal wrath of Almighty God.

- HOWEVER: There is good news. They are not the only ones that God has given up.

Romans 8:32 tells us that God the Father “**did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us.**” (*That’s the same verb*)

- For our sake God made Christ to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.
- BY the grace of God, through Faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross, sinful men and women are moved from wrath to righteousness.

I would have to assume from the way that Paul described the city of Corinth that they too were experiencing God’s wrath of abandonment. Listen:

1 Corinthians 6: 9 **Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality,**
 10 **nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.** 11 **And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.**

My friends, If you are here today and you are struggling with your sexual identity, If you have given yourself up to a lifestyle of immorality the Word of God is calling you to repent and to cast yourself on the mercy of God that was so brilliantly revealed in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

- All of us have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, but HE has made a way, One Way that we can be made right, and that is through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus. God put Him forward as a propitiation by his blood, to be received by faith.
- I urge you in the strongest way possible to abandon your immorality, confess your sin and trust in the cleansing blood of Christ.