

October 6, 2019

Speaker: Eric Naus **Series:** This I Believe – The Book of Romans

Passage: Romans 1:18-32

Community Group Questions: "The Making of a Godless World"

1. Read Romans 1:18-32 aloud as a group. Verse 18 is an important transition in the book of Romans. The Apostle Paul's "introductions" are now over, and he begins a systematic explanation of the gospel, which will last for several chapters. But, before getting to the good news of salvation in Christ, Paul starts by explaining the "bad news" that the wrath of God is revealed against our sin. Paul gives us the "diagnosis" before he gets to the "cure." In your opinion, is it important to spend time understanding the bad news that the gospel solves? How so?
2. Verse 18 tells us that the "wrath of God is revealed" against ungodly and unrighteous humanity. God's wrath is his holy hostility to sin and evil. Unlike human anger, God's anger is perfect, controlled, and just. Is it good that God gets angry at sin and evil in our world? How does the idea of the "wrath of God" give us comfort in the face of injustice, evil, and sin?
3. Read verses 18-20. Paul explains that God's wrath is justified because people have "suppressed" the truth of God that they see in his creation. Looking out at the universe, we have an instinctive ability to perceive God's attributes of eternal power, divine nature, and creative genius. Yet, people deny such evidence because they want to live without accountability to God. As you look at our current culture, where do you see people suppressing the truth of God in this way? As you look honestly at your own life, where do you find yourself guilty of "suppressing" the evidence of God around you, in order to go your own way?
4. Read verses 21-23. Paul says that people make a terrible "exchange." They trade in the worship of the true and glorious God for the worship of idols, mere "images" of created things. For ancient people, this meant literal idols made of wood and stone. Yet, modern people like us worship more sophisticated idols like career, material possessions, comfort, sex, or the idol of self. In your opinion, what are some of the chief idols that our culture tends to worship? Why is it such a tragic exchange to trade in God for these counterfeits? What idols are you tempted to trade God for?
5. Read 24-27. Paul explains that in response to man's idolatry, God "gave them up" to sexual immorality (see verses 24 and 26 for that phrase "gave them up"). This means that God hands people over to the consequences of their willing, sinful choices. He lets them float even further down the stream of sinful destruction. In particular, Paul says that idolatry leads to sexual impurity. In the ancient world, the gods

you worshiped dictated your sexual practices. As you think about our modern idols today, how do the “gods” we worship dictate our sexual values and lifestyles?

6. By contrast with idols, the God of the Bible has specific designs for our sexual expression. Genesis 1 and 2 make it clear that God made human gender, and that he designed sexual intimacy to be experienced between one man and one woman within the safety of a life-long covenant of marriage (see especially Genesis 1:26-27 and 2:18-25). In verses 26-27, Paul holds up homosexual relationships as a striking example where people take God’s “natural” design (God’s created intention) and turn it upside down. (Paul might have brought up any number of other examples, like pornography, or adultery, or sexual intimacy with any person outside the confines of the biblical marriage covenant). Why does God care so much about human sexual expression? How is God’s goodness and love for us seen in the fact that sexual immorality provokes his holy anger? As Christians seeking to honor God with our sexuality, how should we relate to those far from God when it comes to these very challenging topics? In other words, how do we communicate God’s good design for sexuality to people, while at the same time, treating them with dignity and love in how we share about these things?
7. Read 28-32. In this steady drift away from God’s goodness, man participates in all kinds of social evils, as seen in this paragraph. Do you agree that sin is never “just personal,” but always has various consequences that spill over onto others? Which of the various sins described in this paragraph have you especially seen in our culture today? Which have you seen in the lives of other Christians?
8. As we look at this passage as a whole, it describes entire societies and cultures as they drift away from God, but it also describes individuals in their rebellion against God. Even if you are a Christian, do you see this passage as an accurate description of your heart if God had never come to your rescue? How should this passage of Scripture make us profoundly grateful for God’s grace in Christ?
9. Read Romans 3:21-25. How does the good news of the gospel address the problem of God’s just wrath? How does belief in Christ begin to “undo” the destruction described in Romans 1:18-32? How have you seen God’s grace in your life undo the destructive effects of sin, and bring you to a place of spiritual and relational wholeness?
10. Prayer suggestion: Spend time repenting of the sins recounted in the passage, and thank God for the salvation and healing power that is found in the gospel.