

“Houston, We Have a Problem” // Romans 1:18–32 (part 1) // Romans #3

CORE Commissioning

This weekend we want to recognize two very important DAYS: Today is **National Sanctity of Human Life Day** and, of course, **MLK Day**.

- So often the church is known for what it's *against*...but these two special days, in different ways, **remind us what we're for**.
- (People ask sometimes why we sometimes talk about these together--both holidays happen together)
- But they are also both **national moments to remind ourselves** something the Bible teaches very clearly--that **every human being is created** in the image of God and deserves to be treated with dignity and respect **from the womb to the tomb**.

Just as Dr. King said, *“Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.”*

- Meaning we, SC, **can never sit comfortably** when there is anyone in our country made in the image of God being treated unjustly.
- It's why we **stand against racism, discrimination**, or any attempt to diminish or dehumanize our neighbors.

This is also **why we partner with pregnancy support centers** such as the Human Coalition, Gateway, and Hands for Hope.

- In fact, next weekend we're going to have some very practical next steps for you to take in getting involved--with women in crisis, single moms, and on behalf of children in the womb.

But **this weekend in particular**, I want to **announce something very exciting** that we've been working on.

- You know **TSC wants to grow as a multi-ethnic church...** for 2 reasons:
 - 1) it's a **better reflection of the gospel** when we are a group of believers from various cultures that come together w/ **1 common hope** in JC;
 - 2) we are called to reach all peoples in RDU, not just one type.
- **So, we say our aim is to reflect the diversity** of our community & proclaim the diversity of the Kingdom.

In light of this, we want to introduce you to a group we have established called **CORE: Commission for Oneness and Reconciliation**.

- **It's made up of both pastors and lay leaders** at the church, including [**I'm going to call them up to the stage and we'll pray to commission them**] Tremayne Manson, Rosie Harris, Raudel Hernandez, Leslie Hildreth, KJ Hill, Chris Green, and Rick Langston.
- **CORE will provide vision, leadership, support, and counsel for me, our directional elders**, our campus elder teams, and the church at large as we pursue racial reconciliation, diversity, and oneness.

COMMISSION / PRAY / RECOGNIZE

ROMANS 1 / P. 20 JOURNAL (?s, disagree?)

During our introduction to Romans I told you that during the first 100 years of **Harvard Law School** they had **1st year law students analyze Romans as part of their curriculum** because of the careful way Paul builds his argument. He **starts with common experience** and shows how his theory--the gospel--best explains the facts; **along the way he**

raises objections and not only answers them, but shows how they actually strengthen his case.

Today, starting with Romans 1:18 (p. 20 in your JOURNAL) Paul begins to build his case for *why the gospel really is the only answer* to humanity's problems. Why he's so eager and driven to get it to everybody.

So, here's the question Paul is answering: **Why can only the gospel fix us?**

- **Why can't just a little religion do the trick?** I mean, maybe we just need a **good talking to?** Why doesn't God just **renew Israel's commission** to deliver God's law to everybody?
 - Just **blow the whistle** and call a reset--OK, everybody back in the pool; all-skate again going in the same direction.
- And, **speaking of God's law, what about people who have never heard God's commands in the Bible?**
 - I mean, we can't blame them for failing to obey something they didn't even know about, right?
 - If all of a sudden an **usher comes up to you and says**, "Sorry, sir, we do not allow toupees at TSC you must leave," (If you have a toupee, you could **rightfully say**, "Well, no one told me that. There were no signs coming in about this being a toupee-free zone." This is unfair. (BTW, this is made up: if you have a toupee you are more than welcome here. **If you are brave enough to wear it, we've got nothing but respect** for you
 - **But, can't people say that about the gospel?** How is it fair for God to hold people accountable for something they never even had a chance to hear?
 - People have this idea that **Christians believe that when you die** you are **suddenly going to stand before God** and he's going to say, "A-ha! You didn't believe in Jesus!"
 - And **a lot of people are going to say**, "Wait, Jesus? Jesus who?" and God will say, "Well, it's too late now! You should've asked!" And as he casts them **tumbling down into hell** they say, "But I never heard about Jesus...." and

he mumbles "tough cookies" back at them, in Latin or something.

- **Is that what is going on?**

So why does Paul believe the gospel is the only hope for every person, including those who have never heard of it?

(And, one more thing: As I told you last week, **Why does Paul think** that this gospel is going to **fundamentally rewrite the narrative** of the human race in a way that produces a **new humanity that will bring the peoples** of the world back together?)

That's where Paul turns in Romans 1:18. He's got to demonstrate that everyone, both religious and irreligious alike, need the gospel.

He's gotta **get us lost** before he can get us saved.

So, here we go.

Romans 1:18–32

¹⁸ For God's wrath is revealed from heaven against all godlessness and unrighteousness of people... 2 dimensions here

- **Godlessness** means **wrong attitudes** toward God. A corruption in our vertical relationship.
- **Unrighteousness** is **corruption in our horizontal relationships**. Instead of being loving, humble, and truthful, We tend to be self-centered, proud and manipulating.¹

God's wrath is against people like this, ...who (watch this) by their unrighteousness suppress the truth,

- These attitudes of heart make them **suppress** (push down) the truth.

¹ Tim Keller, *Romans for You*, 26

- **Suppression, you know, is not the same as ignorance.** Suppression means the truth is in there but you kept yourself from acknowledging it.
- Like a **beach ball** you are trying to hold under the water: it keeps trying to come to the surface and you keep pushing it down.

Tim Keller says that WHAT PAUL IS SAYING HERE IS THAT WHEN IT COMES TO THE KNOWLEDGE OF GOD, “we know, **but sometimes we don’t know because we don’t want to know.**” Does that sound confusing?.

- **Near the end of WWII, the first town with a concentration camp that the Allied forces** liberated was a town called **Ohrdruf, Germany.** The **Nazis tried to get rid of any evidence** of the camp, but the Allied soldiers got there before they could do this. American GI’s **witnessed hundreds of dead bodies.** It was the **first concentration camp** that they had witnessed.

A few hours later, **General Patton arrived and promptly vomited** upon witnessing the scene. The next day, **Patton brought the mayor of Ohrdruf and his wife to see for themselves** what they had to have known what was happening in their town. **He ordered the mayor and every able body in the town to dig graves for each body.**

After they dug the graves and conducted a funeral for the deceased, Patton found out that the mayor and his wife hung themselves. Before their death, they left a note that read, “*We didn’t know... but we knew.*”²

“**We know,**” says Keller, “but we **don’t know** because we don’t want to know.”

The truth is too uncomfortable, and would demand too much change. So **subconsciously we choose** not to know.

² Tim Keller, “The Disobedience of Saul,” sermon preached at Redeemer Presbyterian Church on Jan. 4, 2004.

We’ll come back to this idea, but for now let’s keep going in the text.

19 because what may be known of God is manifest in them (btw, love the **NKJV** here, and it’s how I memorized this, so let me use it here) , **for God has shown it to them.** **TWO PLACES** God revealed himself to us--IN US and TO US.

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,**

To us: Creation, Scripture says, declares to us the reality, power and glory of God.³

Throughout history, **philosophers have broken this down** in a number of ways.

- **One is called the “cosmological argument.”** This one **goes back all the way to Aristotle.** It’s the question of **why there is something rather than nothing,** and where did the **original something** come from?
 - If the world began **14 billion years ago with a Big Bang,** where did the materials that caused the Big Bang come from?
 - You **can’t keep going back** in infinite regress into nothingness.
 - Eventually **something** has to come **from somewhere.** “**Nothingness**” can’t just explode.
 - In his book **God Delusion, Richard Dawkins** admits this is a problem. He says, **“Darwin’s theory works for biology, but not for cosmology (or, ultimate origins).”** And, **“Cosmology is waiting on its Darwin.”**
 - In other words, **he thinks that while they have explained how life took shape** on the earth, he admits they **still have no idea where life itself,** or the materials that produced life, came from.
 - **We need a theory,** he says, **as to why anything exists, because it is self-evident that nothing x nobody** can’t equal **everything.**

³ Psalm 19:1

- **But don't worry,"** he says in the book, one day we'll find it. (Which is a **textbook example of a blind, hopeful leap of faith.**)
- **Cosmological argument**
- Then there is what philosophers call the **"teleological argument" for God.** (nerding out? May be useful as you talk to others)
 - **Teleos means purpose: Not only do we have the question of why there is something rather than nothing, but our creation appears to be very finely tuned--for a purpose.**
 - The **more we learn** about this, the **more amazing** it becomes.
 - Scientists say that **life on earth depends** on multiple factors that are **so precise** that if they were off by even a hair, life could not exist. They call it the **Goldilocks principle**: things are "just right" for human life.⁴
 - **For example: The makeup of our atmosphere.** GRAPHICS: (78% Nitrogen, 21% Oxygen, 0.5% Argon, 0.03% Carbon Dioxide.) *Notice any difference in these?*
 - Yet it's the **difference between life and death.** If some of **those levels were even slightly off**—for example, if the level of **oxygen dropped by 6%** we would all suffocate; if it **rose by 4%**, our planet would erupt into a giant fireball. **And we'd all die.**⁵
 - Or, if the **CO2 were just a little higher (let's say, 3%)** or a just **little bit lower** (say, 0.01%), then the earth would either **become an oven** or have **no atmosphere** at all.⁶ **And we'd all die.**
 - **Or this: The water molecule is the only molecule whose solid form** (ice) is less dense than its liquid form. Which means that when it freezes it floats. **If ice did not float**, it would sink to the bottom and the **whole ocean would eventually freeze** from the bottom up and... **we would all die.**

- **Or the distance of the earth from the sun: If we were 2% closer** to the sun, the planet would be too hot for water to exist. **And... SAY IT WITH ME: we'd all die.**⁷
- **And then there's tilt of the earth, which is set at an ideal 23.5 degrees**, which we've learned is perfect for temperatures and tides and such. **You've probably never thought about it**, but if it was not tilted, **temperatures would be extreme** and **WE'D ALL DIE.** At least the humans.
- **One more for fun: We've learned that if Jupiter wasn't the size and in the orbit it is**, astronomers predict that there would be 10,000x the number of asteroid strikes right here on earth, and **WE'D ALL DIE.**
 - **Jupiter is like the Luke Skywalker of planets**, setting picks on asteroids so the earth can **get open for the 3-pointer** of life. **Without it, our planet would be pummeled** with asteroids and life could never exist.

Then we **put up our telescopes** and **pull out our microscopes** and we find the same complexity in the cell and atomic structure:

- Even **the most basic DNA strands** are incredibly complex, enough so that **Francis Collins**, head of the human genome project, says "How could a cosmic accident ever result in something of this digital elegance of a DNA strand?"⁸
 - It's like thinking **an explosion in an ink factory** could inadvertently produce the collected works of Shakespeare.
- And just so you know, these are **not the conclusions of seminary grads doubling** as amateur scientists. The late Stephen Hawking said in one of his later books, **The laws of science, as we know them at present, contain many (precise ratios), like the size of the electric charge of the electron and the ratio of the masses of the proton and the electron...** The remarkable fact is that the values of these numbers seem to have been very finely adjusted to make

⁴ Or, more technically, the "anthropic principle"

⁵ I.e. moved from 21% to 25% or 15%.

⁶ <http://hyperphysics.phy-astr.gsu.edu/hbase/Astro/atmohab.html>

⁷ <https://physicsworld.com/a/earth-is-closer-to-the-edge-of-suns-habitable-zone/>

⁸ "DNA, with its phosphate-sugar backbone and intricately arranged organic bases, stacked neatly on top of one another and paired together at each rung of the twisted double helix, seems an utterly improbable molecule to have 'just happened'—especially since DNA seems to possess no intrinsic means of copying itself." —Francis Collins, "The Language of God," 91

possible the development of life.” Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*⁹

- **One scientist said;** The **greatest miracle of all time** without any close second, is the existence of life on our planet!¹⁰
- You say, “Well, maybe we’re just lucky. In a universe as big as ours our planet was **bound to exist somewhere** and we just happen to be on it.”
 - But scientists say that **the odds of a planet like earth existing** are so heart-stoppingly astronomical that the notion that it all ‘just happened’ defies common sense. It’s **like tossing a coin every second** and having it come up heads for 10 billion years in a row.¹¹
 - So, **yeah, you can speculate that this part of the galaxy** was just really, really lucky, but is that the **best and easiest explanation** for what we see?
 - It takes an **anti-God bias** to arrive there--it’s *usually that people have some other problem* that follows from a God creating it all that makes them look at the evidence that way.
 - WE KNOW, BUT WE DON’T KNOW because we don’t want to know

He has shown it **to us**, Paul says, and he has revealed it **IN US**.

- There are **things in our hearts** that tell us we are **more than just accidental biology**--

⁹ Stephen Hawking, *A Brief History of Time*, 125. In the (), he says “fundamental numbers.”

¹⁰ “Some thinkers claim that none of this ought to be thought surprising or as requiring explanation: no matter how things had been, it would have been exceedingly improbable. (No matter what distribution of cards is dealt, the distribution dealt will be improbable.) This is perhaps right, but how does it work? and how is it relevant? We are playing poker; each time I deal I get all the aces; you get suspicious: I try to allay your suspicions by pointing out that my getting all the aces each time I deal is no more improbable than any other equally specific distribution over the relevant number of deals. Would that explanation play in Dodge City (or Tombstone)?” Alvin Plantinga, Class Lecture, “Two Dozen or So Theistic Arguments.” https://www.calvin.edu/academic/philosophy/virtual_library/articles/plantinga_alvin/two_dozen_or_so_theistic_arguments.pdf

¹¹ Eric Metaxas, *Miracles*. Back in 1966, Carl Sagan, a famous atheist, posited that there were two factors needed for life to exist—the right kind of star and a planet the right distance from that star. Based on that, scientists expected billions of such planets to exist. But scientists gradually began to realize that Sagan’s estimate was too small. His 2 parameters became 10, then 20, then 50. Now it’s at 200. We’ve looked all throughout the universe, and haven’t found any that meet more than a handful of these.

- Like **our longings for love and meaning and eternity**.
 - The atheist philosopher **Albert Camus** said that we **long for “love without parting,”** but that a universe without God gives us only **“the conscious certainty of death without hope.”**
 - Camus called this **“the Absurdity of life.”**¹² He said life was one **long, tragic, absurd comedy**, as we seek things from life that life simply can’t provide.
 - “But being **brave,”** he said, “was acknowledging that and **plodding forward into the darkness anyway.”**
 - **C.S. Lewis had a different answer:** *A baby feels hunger: well, there is such a thing as food. A duckling wants to swim: well, there is such a thing as water. Men feel sexual desire: well, there is such a thing as sex. If I find in myself a desire which no experience in this world can satisfy, the most probable explanation is that I was made for another world.*¹³
 - **Which one do you prefer?** That our longings for meaning and justice and eternity are a **cruel, accidental, joke**; or that they are whispers that we were created for another world?
 - BTW, this is called the **argument from desire**.
- **Back in 2009, the famed British journalist and biographer, A.N. Wilson, atheist,** made quite a sensation when he declared himself a Christian, said, *“In the Western world we’ve been told that only stupid people believe in Christianity. But as a matter of fact, it’s atheism that is a dry, lifeless creed and totally irrational. Atheism says that we’re just a collection of chemicals. It has no answer whatsoever to the question of how (this animated sack of accidental chemicals) could be capable of love or heroism or poetry.”*

Another dimension of this is what philosophers call the moral argument: The **very fact that we have moral feelings** suggest the presence of a divine law giver.

¹² Albert Camus, *The Wind at Djemila*. See Timothy and Kathy Keller, *God’s Wisdom for Navigating Life*, p. 14.

¹³ C. S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Book III, chap 10, “Hope.”

- **This week I parked in parking garage** and every few feet was a sign: “Keep your parking ticket with you.” Someone, somewhere, was going to ask for it!
- In the same way, feelings of **guilt and moral obligation** point to a Divine Lawgiver to whom we will give account.
- **Feelings of guilt and moral obligation are common to all people** in all cultures.
- And **here’s the other thing**: they are not present in any form in the animal kingdom.
 - We all know cats, for example, seem to derive some pleasure from **playing with a mouse** before they eat it. Yet you never find a cat sniveling under the bed later feeling bad... That’s not just because **they are exceptionally evil. It’s just in their nature.** If a lion mauls a human, you never find him in the woods later wracked with guilt (Oh, what have I done?)... They don’t feel guilty for acting according to their natures.
 - There’s **no Great White Sharks named Bruce** out there saying, “I am not a mindless eating machine: Fish are friends not food.” **That’s Disney fantasy.**
- **Yet, we do.** Doesn’t the fact that we all have feelings of guilt point to the fact that **we are stamped with the image** of some **Divine Lawgiver**, who has implanted in our hearts his sense of right, and truth, and love?
- **Even if we stop believing in God**, we can’t shake this idea that we’re going to be held accountable one day.
 - **One of my favorite illustrations** about this is from Franz Kafka’s *The Trial*... Kafka intended that to be a picture of the human soul going through life. You have a voice inside you telling you’re guilty.
 - Doesn’t that point to **the fact that one day** we’ll face the **divine law-giver who has stamped his image** and his requirements on our hearts?

What may be known about God is evident to us and in us... but, we suppressed that truth: We KNOW, BUT we didn’t know, because we didn’t want to know

²¹ For though they knew God, they did not glorify him as God or show gratitude.

- We **didn’t want to embrace the truth** about a glorious, all-powerful, holy, ruling God it to be true.
- Because...
 - **We wanted to make the rules.**
 - **We wanted to take God’s glory for ourselves**—we wanted to use our lives to direct others attention toward us, not toward him.
 - **So we became plagiarizers.** We claimed God’s work for ourselves.
 - We **didn’t want to acknowledge that all our talents**, our brains, and every bit of our energy was a gift from God. Or even **to acknowledge** how much we owed to the circumstances of our time and birth in what we’ve accomplished.
 - I see it all the time in RDU: I’m a self-made man. No one gave me anything...
 - **To use a term** from that great **theologian Brian Regan, we became gigantic Me-Monsters.** You know, the guy at the party who manages to turn every conversation back toward himself.
 - No **matter what you’ve done**, he’s done something better. The guy at the party who says, **“Oh, I’m tired of talking about me... why don’t you talk about me for a while?”**
 - **me... Me... ME.**
 - Brian says he **wishes he could walk on the moon** because then he’d have the perfect comeback for the Me-Monster: “Oh yeah, well I walked on the moon.” Because nothing ever beats that.
 - **Now, we may have better social manners** than the Me-Monster, but in our heart, **we all have something in common with him.**
 - We want to be the center of our story, making the rules...
 - We’re the **point**. Our comfort is the priority. We know best. Our way is better. Our will is supreme.

And so, our ²¹ ~~Instead, their thinking~~ became worthless, and their senseless hearts were darkened. ²² Claiming to be wise, they became fools

Humanity's suppression of truth, Paul explains, **manifests itself in two forms: an irreligious form of suppression and a religious one**

Irreligious Suppression: Atheism (or agnosticism)

- **Listen, I'm not saying there are not people genuinely convinced that they are atheists.** I'm saying that **according to Romans 1** that atheism is driven by a subconscious desire not to know. **We know but we don't know because we don't want to know.**
 - **Imagine a man whose wife died**, leaving him one son. He's also really frustrated and disappointed in his career, so, as a result everything revolves around his son. He sends him to the best school. One day the teacher tells him there's **pretty good evidence that his son routinely cheats** and steals from other kids. But, as parents often do, **the father works out a counter theory** that explains the evidence, convinces himself that the people and teachers at this school have it out for them and pulls his son out of school. Well, **six months later, the same situation** happens at new school and **every school thereafter**. See, in his heart, he knows the truth. But in his mind, **he won't admit it to himself. His son is his savior and his joy** and he **can't entertain that theory.**¹⁴
 - **He knows but he doesn't know because he doesn't want to know.**
 - **The same thing happens with us and God.** Everybody in their heart knows the truth, but we don't want to admit it to ourselves so some of us convinced ourselves **there is no God**. We don't like the thought of an all-powerful, ruling God, so we suppress the truth.
- **Which is why** a lot of the **great atheist-intellec**ts of the last 100 years who have become Christians—people like T.S. Elliot, W.H. Auden, C.E.M. Joad, C.S. Lewis, A. N. Wilson¹⁵ (btw, ever notice all

the really smart people go by their initials)—have all said, *“What brought me to faith was not some new argument or evidence. I just admitted to myself that I always knew there was a God.”*

- The **beach ball kept trying to come to the surface and** eventually I let it.
- **Or, to leave the world of academia**, take a group like the **Auca Indians** who had had no contact in their history with the outside world: “You may think when we attacked and brutalized our neighbors it was because we were just ignorant, but **we always knew what we were doing was wrong and offensive** to whatever God or gods were out there.”¹⁶
- **The beach ball is there.** There's a sense in which we've always known, even if we deny it. *We know but we don't know because we don't want to know.*
- **When I am sharing Christ with someone**, I often will ask, “If you come to see these things are true, are you willing to change your life in response? *“Because a willingness to follow the truth is a prerequisite to knowing the truth.”* You may have to ask that to your ONE. Sometimes challenge them... **before the head will understand truth the heart must be surrendered to follow truth.**

The other way our suppression of truth manifested itself was idolatry.

(Religious Suppression: Idolatry)

²³ ...and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man, birds, four-footed animals, and reptiles.

We changed the object of our worship into something we could control.

- The **false gods humanity has worshipped** all have one thing in common--they exist to serve us.

¹⁴ Adapted from *Tim Keller, “The God Who Is,” sermon on Romans 1:16-25, Nov. 24, 2010.*

¹⁵ Also, Antony Flew, Alisdair MacIntyre

¹⁶ Thomas Schreiner says it: “God has stitched into the fabric of the human mind his existence and power so that they are instinctively recognized when viewing the created world.”

- I have told you that when it comes to worship we are **like the pre-Copernican astronomers** who assumed that the earth was in the center of the universe and everything revolved around us.
- **We worshipped**, but our main question was how to get God into orbit around our lives.
- **You see that even in our prayers--**
 - *God, this is what I need,*
 - *what I want. God, fix this the way I want.*
 - *Smite her for what she said about me.*
 - *And if you don't, then I'll just be mad at you, and I'll punish you by refusing to believe in you.*
- But **the most basic truth of Creation** is that **we were created for God** and his glory--he is at **the center**. But we wanted a God who would serve us, be **our divine butler**, and so we **reimagined God** in that form.

(BTW--that **persistent, unquenchable thirst** of the human race to worship is the **result of that knowledge of God** that he put in us.

Anthropologists have noted is that **all peoples in all place worship**.

- **It's that balloon** inside of us.
- Even if you're not religious. **We can no more turn off worship** by not being religious than we could turn off our sex drive by not getting married.
- **Anthropologists say we 'telic' creatures—purposed people--we have to live for something**. One say: "There has to be something that captures our imagination and our allegiance, which is the resting place of our deepest hopes and to which we look to calm our deepest fears. Whatever that thing is, we worship it--we pursue it. It's the one the thing we cannot live without, defining and validating everything we do."¹⁷
 - **Without God**, we just find someone to replace him.
 - **Ernest Becker** (Jewish agnostic)... said that after he quit believing in God, he found his soul **still searching for acceptance and validation from somebody**. He said in his

¹⁷ Keller, *Romans for You*, 27.

book *The Denial of Death*, "That modern society, after having ceased to believe in God... **turned to the romantic partner as a replacement... We look to a romantic partner to free us of our sense of nothingness. We want to be justified. We want to know that our existence hasn't been in vain. We want redemption, nothing less... In case we are inclined to forget how deified the romantic love object is, the popular songs continually remind us..."¹⁸**

- **Taylor Swift/Zayn Malik**: "I don't wanna live forever, 'cause I know (w/o you) I'll be living in vain... "
- **J Bieber**, "Baby": "Without you I can't face life"
- **John Legend**: "You're my end and my beginning... I'll give my all to you."

You say, "That's the problem with all that **new fangled music...**"

Chicago--you're the meaning... I can do this all day.

Alabama: There's no way I could make it w/o you... I can do this all day with every genre.

We deify the romantic object and worship it. We have to. We can no more **turn off our instinct to worship** by not being religious than we can turn off our sex drive by remaining single.

The point is, When you say, "What about those that have never heard? Everybody's heard.

God showed it to us and revealed it in us. But we **suppress that knowledge of an all-ruling, all-sovereign God** because we didn't want it to be true. (That's **the shape of all of our hearts**). And for that reason we all **stand condemned**.

²⁴ Therefore **God delivered them over in the desires of their hearts to sexual impurity, so that their bodies were degraded among themselves.**

This is where we'll pick up next week, but let me at least introduce it...

¹⁸ The Denial of Death, 160–67

- **The first wave of God’s judgment is to give us what we want.** (*That’s what ‘delivered us over’ means*)
 - Say the earth rebels against the sun and says, “I am **sick of you being in the center of my universe**. Always gotta be spinning around you. You, you, you. I am going to put myself at the center. Well, the sun is **30K bigger than the earth** and because of that has the gravitational capacity to keep everything in orbit. The earth does not.
 - So, if the **earth rebels and says, “From now on, I will be at the center,” the sun might just say, “OK,”** and then the solar system would begin to unravel--not because the sun did something to the earth, but because it simply let the earth have its wish.
- **That is essentially what God did with us. He let us have our way.** Throughout the **rest of the passage (if you read it in Greek)**, there’s a lot of **tit for tat**:
 - For example, vs. 23 they *exchanged* the glory of God for images (vs. 23) ... so God *exchanged* them over to disgraceful passions (vs. 26)
 - They *dishonored* God (vs. 21) ... so God let them *dishonor* themselves (vs. 24)¹⁹
 - "they did not see *fit* to acknowledge God" (vs. 28) ... so God *gave* them up to an *unfit* mind" (vs. 28)²⁰
 - All parallel structure in Greek (**This is part of what it means for “the righteousness of God to be revealed,” (vs. 17),** btw. God’s wrath corresponds perfectly to our actions and our rebellion. **He just gives us** what we ask for.)²¹

Next week we’ll talk about how this manifests in society: How humanity’s hearts began to darken, and how our desires began to

¹⁹ [Verbs here are varied in English, but it's the same word—doxa—in Greek]

²⁰ The word-play is between "fit" and "unfit" (vb, dokimazō and adj, adokimos) and not "acknowledge" (vb, exō).

²¹ “His judgment is to give us over to the destructive power of idolatry, and of evil. When we sin, it sets up stresses and strains in the fabric of the order that God created. Instead of us finding blessing, our sin causes breakdowns spiritually, psychologically, socially, and physically. The great tragedy is that we choose this for ourselves. God allows us to walk through the door we have chosen.” Keller, *Romans for You*, 30. Oscar Wilde, the Irish playwright: “When the gods wish to punish us, they answer our prayers.”

corrupt, manifesting in things like skewed sexual passions. (YOU SAY, Wow... next week sounds great!)

And then how, as societies, we set about to justify and license sin...

- And specifically, **next week, I’ll show you how we in our own society** have done it in with things like **racial discrimination** and how we continue to do it today through things like **prejudice and double standards** in the legal system as well as **licensed abortion**.
- **Where even though the wrongness** is pretty obvious, we come up with ways to **ignore, justify** or even **institutionalize** it.
- But **more on that** next week.

MUSIC

But I don’t want to end this week on too much despair.

- (“How was church today.” Crowded, and we heard a lecture on eternal condemnation and how **we all deserve it**”)

So, let me leave off with this:

Remember in the theme verse of Romans, Romans 1:16–17, Paul says that in the gospel **God reveals his righteousness?**

- And what we **see in the gospel** is that his righteousness is not a standard he judges us by but a gift that God gives to us.

The **gospel shows you that even though all of us alike have turned away from God** and our hearts have grown selfish, wicked, and corrupt, **God kept coming** after us.

The gospel showed us something about God creation could never show us: our God is a **faithful pursuing Father who wouldn’t let us go** even after we rejected him.

- And **when it came time to pour out his judgment** he poured it out first on himself, and he will **release us from our punishment if we will accept that** and trust it.

- We can know the **power of God from CREATION**, and the **justice of God from our CONSCIENCES**, but we can only the love of God from **the THE CROSS**
- **ROMANS 5:8**
- **Do you want to know who God is?** The cross shows you, “Yes, he’s holy. Yes, you’re unrighteous. But he came after you anyway.”

The first Russian cosmonaut, Urie Gagarin, famously said when he got to space, *“My atheism has been confirmed. I went up in space and looked around, and I didn’t see any God.”*

- **Shortly after this C.S. Lewis wrote essay on creation:** If there is a God who created everything, God would not relate to us the way a person who lives upstairs relates to a person who lives downstairs--where you could pop your head up there and see him.
- **God would relate to us the way Shakespeare relates to Hamlet.** Hamlet’s never going to find out anything about Shakespeare by going backstage. **The only way Hamlet knows Shakespeare is if Shakespeare writes information about himself** into the play.
- **The gospel goes one better.** God **inserted himself** into the creation.
- **And, amazingly**, he did so not as the Judge but as the Redeemer.²²
- Amazing love, how can it be, that thou, my God, would die for me?
- RYRIE: At some place, philosophy stop and you look tot he cross. **The gospel of Romans is so deep it baffles the theologian**, but simple enough a child can understand.

The question: Will you accept God’s self-revelation as Redeemer?
That’s what this **whole book** is about.

Because if you will, the path of escape from sin lies open before you.

- **If it was refusing to worship God that first led you into sin**, then starting to **worship him again will lead you out.**
- If you will give glory to him, and thank him, and submit to him, the corrupting power of sin will lose its hold over you.

So, 2 questions:

- Ever received Jesus?
- Ready to worship?

²² Adapted from Tim Keller, “The God Who Is,” sermon on Romans 1:16-25, Nov. 24, 2010.

