

## *Knowledge Isn't Enough*

It's not an information problem; it's a choice problem  
Blueprint for Breakthrough Series (Romans) – Part 3

Romans 1:18-31  
3/21/26-3/22/26

### Introduction

- Rules of Grammar - One of the great things about rules of grammar and even other languages that utilize definition more, is that we get a behind the scenes look at what was intended by the author. Let me give you a simple example:
  - What does an adjective do? – it describes. If I said, 'look, there's a beautiful butterfly', what is the adjective? Beautiful. The word beautiful enhances the noun, or main subject of the sentence.
  - Here's another example – If I say the sentence: "The boy threw the ball to his friend." What is the subject – who is performing the primary action? The boy. He's the subject. What the DIRECT object? What is receiving the boy's action? The Ball. Who is he throwing it to? Who is the INDIRECT object? The friend. He receives the ball.
    - One of the benefits of studying grammar rules is that you can get closer to the intention of the author and the meaning of something you are reading - That becomes very important when studying the Bible.
  - Another level (various meanings of a word) – but there's one other level of language grammar that can really help and it's how to tell when **one word means a bunch of different things**: In English, we have a ton of words that have various meanings. As a matter of fact, the possible meanings may not have anything to do with each other. For example the word: BAT. It can be something you use in baseball to hit the ball. It can be an animal that flies around. Totally different.
  - But we also have words that are totally different but mean the same thing, they are called synonyms. For example: **identical, similar, comparable, analogous, equivalent, equal, and a host of other words all variations and synonyms of the word: SAME.**
  - Foreign language translation - In other languages we encounter rules of grammar and realize that **although we need to translate different words as the same in English they have nuances and variations**. Sometimes that don't really matter and sometimes they make a huge difference to the overall meaning.
    - The Book of Romans – because the book we are studying, the book of Romans, is so deep and complex, **it's going to be necessary to periodically study the words that Paul is using because it changes how we read it**. I apologize in advance. I will try not to do it unless it's absolutely necessary because pastors throwing out Greek words normally sounds like they are trying to flex and it irritates me. It can be pretentious.
  - Knowing - **One of those key words in Greek that applies to our passage today is the word, KNOW**. In English we realize that the word know can mean a couple different things about how we gained information, but in Greek there are totally different words that are translated know and the differences matter. There are

two common Greek words & definitions that specifically define what we are talking about.

- *Oida* – knowledge, or something we understand through observation.
- *Ginosko* – personally, intimately, and experientially know something.
  - **One is informational/factual and one is relational/experiential – The Bible is clear that to know OF God is basic, to know God personally is transformational.** Consider what the demons know. They know OF God more than all of us, but they don't submit to Him, love Him, honor Him, respect Him, or have a relationship with Him. Consider who knew more about God factually: the **Pharisees or the Disciples?** One group was highly educated; the other group was not. Which ones are saved and walk with Jesus? May our theology lead to our transformation.
    - The theology of demons – *James 2:9 - "You believe that God is one: you do well. Even the demons believe—and shudder!"*
    - Simple and Transformed - *Ac 4:13 – "Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognized that they had been with Jesus."*
    - *Mt 7:21–23 - "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. <sup>22</sup> On that day many will say to me, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?' <sup>23</sup> And then will I declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from me...'"*
      - God's knowledge – of course God KNOWS everything ABOUT us. He knows more information and facts about us than we do about ourselves. But **what He is saying is, 'we were never TOGETHER. You didn't KNOW Me. You did things in my name. You were religious. But we didn't have a RELATIONSHIP.**

### RELATIONSHIP requires more than KNOWLEDGE

- Last Week – Bishop was in the house!
  - Sermon = He shared that it's critical that we remember that God is both RIGHT and He MAKES RIGHT. He is JUST and He JUSTIFIES!
    - Breakthrough Community in Christ – **He reminded us that what creates breakthrough in us is to know that God's grace is for all people. We are all invited to be cleansed by Jesus Christ. Together as a community of equals, walking in faith, we become a community of breakthrough both for ourselves and one another.**
- This Week – What's Wrong with This World? – is God going to do anything about it? Paul comes out swinging. **He begins to lay the foundation for why we need Jesus in the first place. He's laying out the bad news before the good news.** He's going to tell us what got us into such a bad spot where all of mankind is not just

disconnected to God but so many of us are antagonistic and rebellious against God. **How did we get so sinful?** How did we get comfortable with so much sin and rebellion in our lives? How did our society plunge into all this chaos? Why does it feel like we are unanchored and just drifting in a world where everyone is simply doing what is right in their own eyes? Paul has an answer.

- Is it worse than ever?<sup>1</sup> – one of the benefits of being a student of history is that you realize quickly that humanity has always been messed up, and some periods were far darker than others. There are many periods far darker than our current time. So, no, I do not believe that it's worse than ever, but that doesn't mean it's not bad and shouldn't be taken seriously.
- Offense can be taken – Before we walk into this, I need to **caution** you. The Book of Romans and particularly the first couple chapters can be highly offensive and feel attacking, depending on our heart and posture. **Keep these few principles in mind:**
  1. I am not talking down to you – **we are all in this together**. There is no one in this congregation or who can hear my voice that Paul is not going to confront some of our behavior.
  2. If you are a child of God, grace is a factor. One of the reasons we can walk into tough passages like this as Children of God is that not only did Jesus die for our sins and raise again, but He has called us children of God and we live in a relational dynamic with Him and in perpetual grace that gives us freedom and breathing room to be in process.
    - Eph 2:1–10 – “*And you were dead in the trespasses and sins<sup>2</sup> in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—<sup>3</sup> among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the flesh and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.<sup>4</sup> But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,<sup>5</sup> even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—<sup>6</sup> and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,<sup>7</sup> so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.<sup>8</sup> For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God,<sup>9</sup> not a result of works, so that no one may boast.<sup>10</sup> For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.”*”
  3. Jesus is King – no matter what we struggle with in being called out on our behavior, we are reading **God's word** and that means **we are struggling against God**. **He gets to say whatever He wants to say and we are called to adjust. He knows we will wrestle with it, be confused by it, filter it through our insecurities and biases. But we are clay in the potters hands.** Let him have his way in us before we immediately reject a challenging thought.

- Chosen Ignorance
  - Why God is bringing wrath on mankind

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<sup>1</sup> “It is strangely comforting to know that our perceptions of the world getting worse and worse are probably the result of our increasing knowledge rather than other people's increasing wickedness.” NT Wright, Romans for Everyone

- Romans 1:18-20 – *“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. <sup>19</sup> For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. <sup>20</sup> For his 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.”*
  - For<sup>2</sup> – any time we see words like this (for, therefore, since etc.) we need to read what happened before because it’s the platform and foundation on which this next statement ahead of us is based. What did Paul just say that applies to what he’s about to say next? It’s **verse 16, “the gospel...is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes,...”** **Why do we need salvation? Salvation, rescue, from what?**
  - the wrath<sup>3</sup> of God<sup>4</sup> – the wrath of God is simply **the strength and fury coming with God’s reaction to sin and wickedness. His justice is bringing judgment on that which is evil.** God hates sin (sin is anything against Him, His nature, His will) because of the destruction that it creates. God is just and ultimately will not allow evil to win. As patient as He is, there is a limit to it becoming unjust to let it go. So, wrath, destruction of sin, judgment on evil, will come. Whatever that looks like, it’s called, ‘the wrath of God.’ **It’s what we will be caught up into if sin remains in our spirits** (our sin becomes us and our identity if it’s not dealt with), **which is why Jesus needed to come to ‘save us from our sins.’** It was not just saving us from the effects of our sins in this life, though that was part of it, nor was it saving others from our sins (though that is true), it largely about rescuing us from the ultimate end of our sins, the “wages of sin” = spiritual death. What God is mostly concerned about is eternal death. This life has a lot of room to mess up and until we are dead, there’s a lot of jockeying for identity and spiritual reality. God isn’t messing around with eternity

<sup>2</sup> “It is best, then, to retain the usual force of “for,” but to view it as introducing the answer to a question implicit in what Paul has just said: Why has God manifested his righteousness and why can it be appropriated only through faith? Viewed in this light, this conjunction introduces the entire argument of 1:18–3:20—which, indeed, is encapsulated in v. 18.” Douglas Moo, NICNT Commentary

<sup>3</sup> Wrath = “wrath, anger as a state of mind. From oregomai to desire eagerly or earnestly. Aristotle says orge, anger, is desire with grief (MK 3:5). The Stoics considered it as a desire to punish one who seems to have hurt them in a manner he ought not.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

Wrath = orge – a settled, determined indignation. As opposed to thumos which means uncontrolled anger.

“Not a petulant, irrational burst of anger, such as humans often exhibit, but a holy, just revulsion against what is contrary to and opposes his holy nature and will.” NIV Commentary.

“The permanent attitude of the holy and just God when confronted by sin and evil is designated his ‘wrath.’ It is inadequate to regard this term merely as a description of the ‘inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe or as another way of speaking of the results of sin. It is rather a personal quality, without which God would cease to be fully righteous and his love would degenerate into sentimentality. God’s wrath is always tempered with mercy (Rom 5:9).” (New Bible Dictionary, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition).

<sup>4</sup> “In the Bible wrath is an aspect of God’s person, as is clear from the many OT texts that make the “kindling” of God’s wrath the basis for his judgment. God’s wrath is necessary to the biblical conception of God: “As long as God is God, He cannot behold with indifference that His creation is destroyed and His holy will trodden underfoot. Therefore He meets sin with His mighty and annihilating reaction.” The OT regularly pictures God as responding to sin with wrath,<sup>32</sup> but, particularly in the prophets, the wrath of God is associated with the Day of the Lord as a cosmic, climactic outbreak of judgment. Although Paul works with this same conception of God’s wrath, he stresses the working and effects of God’s wrath. Paul speaks of wrath as a present reality under which people outside Christ stand, and often, following the OT prophets, predicts the outpouring of God’s wrath on the future day of judgment.<sup>34</sup> If the main verb in v. 18 is a “futuristic present,” Paul could here also be predicting this climactic outbreak of wrath at the end of history, as in 2:5. But the verb is most likely depicting a present-time situation.” NICNT

though. But on top of all of our personal concerns (am I saved? Am I not), there is a grander narrative about God being the **Creator and King of the universe. He will handle evil.** He will shut down wickedness. It's His nature and it's just. That's the reason for wrath.

- Perspective on wrath – wrath is the response of wiping out evil and wickedness that is killing and destroying God's creation. **Whether we like the idea depends on what side of the wrath we perceive ourselves to be on.** If we are angry at all the bad guys in the world getting away with things we love wrath and justice. If we are possibly, the bad guys, we can't stand the notion and only want grace and understanding. But God is steady and constant. He will hate sin no matter where it's found, in us or outside of us.
- Wrath and Christians – it's important to note that Jesus changed everything. His death and resurrection changed how sin affects His people. God's grace extended to us changes our reality. This means that for true believers (real Christians – who have a relationship with God, have submitted/surrendered, and been cleansed, converted, made new), wrath isn't for us. Discipline is, but wrath is not. Discipline is to make someone better through correction, wrath is to destroy and remove.
- Hab 1:13 *"Your eyes are too pure to look on evil; you cannot tolerate wrong. Why then do you tolerate the treacherous? Why are you silent while the wicked swallow up those more righteous than themselves?"*
- Eph 5:6 *"Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of such things God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient."*
- Col 3:5-6 *"Put to death, therefore, whatever belongs to your earthly nature; sexual immorality, impurity, lust, evil desires and greed, which is idolatry. Because of these, the wrath of God is coming."*
- Eph 2:1-3 *"As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath."*
- is revealed<sup>5</sup> from heaven<sup>6</sup> – This is simply a poetic way of saying, 'it's coming from God.' Heaven in this context is 'God's dwelling place', or 'God's war room.' Paul is making it clear WHO is making the wrath call, and that this is a war of heaven against sin.

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<sup>5</sup> "It is this judgment of the world that the present infliction of God's wrath is intended to reveal. For the present experience of God's wrath is merely a foretaste of what will come on the day of judgment. Furthermore, what both the warning of "wrath to come" and the present experience of wrath demonstrate is the sentence of condemnation under which all people outside Christ stand. It is this reality that Paul wants to get across to this readers here." NICNT

Revealed = apokalupto – "constantly being revealed." The idea of uncovering, bringing to light, or making known.

<sup>6</sup> "Paul's mention of the fact that God's wrath is being revealed "from heaven" adds weight to what Paul is saying: it "significantly implies the majesty of an angry God, and His all-seeing eye, and the wide extent of His wrath: whatever is under heaven, and yet not under the Gospel, is under this wrath." NICNT

- against all ungodliness<sup>7</sup> and unrighteousness<sup>8</sup> of men,<sup>9</sup> - Remember the grammar examples I gave above? Here's where it comes into play again. Notice what the wrath is coming against...**what's the direct object? It's ungodliness and unrighteousness...not people.** What makes God sick to His stomach is wickedness and sin, not people. People who allow sin to thrive in them become vessels of that which God brings wrath against and are swept up in it, but the lake of fire was never created for people, it was created for the devil and his angels to judge sin and wickedness. **God loves people. He hates sin.**
  - *"Until we have seen ourselves as God sees us, we are not likely to be much disturbed over conditions around us as long as they do not get so far out of hand as to threaten our comfortable way of life. We have learned to live with unholiness and have come to look upon it as the natural and expected thing. We are not disappointed that we do not find all truth in our teachers or faithfulness in our politicians or complete honesty in our merchants or full trustworthiness in our friends. That we may continue to exist we make such laws as are necessary to protect us from our fellow men and let it go at that. Since God's first concern for His universe is its moral health, that is, its holiness, whatever is contrary to this is necessarily under His eternal displeasure. To preserve His creation God must destroy whatever would destroy it. When he arises to put down iniquity and save the world from irreparable moral collapse, He is said to be angry. Every wrathful judgment in the history of the world has been a holy act of preservation. The holiness of God, the wrath of God, and the health of the creation are inseparably united. God's wrath is His utter intolerance of whatever degrades and destroys. He hates iniquity as a mother hates the polio that takes the life of her child."* A. W. Tozer, Knowledge of the Holy.
- who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth<sup>10</sup> – **On one hand, mankind is forcibly holding truth down.** Why? Because we don't want to deal with it. We don't want to be told what to do. We want to be the boss of our own lives and do as we wish. **Truth is restricting** if we disagree with it. Truth is painful. **Truth exposes** our lies. **But there is also another level** to this beyond a direct intentional suppression: **our sin blinds us.** We are beings that are easily biased. We think we are logical but we are not. We are more driven by emotions than logic. When we sin, it distorts our processing and filtering. When we get lost or trapped in our sin it messes with our minds and we don't think clearly. Sometimes we find ourselves defending our sin and suppressing the truth, other times we only see in retrospect that our sin had twisted our reasoning and thereby caused us to resist and suppress the truth.
  - John 3:19-20 *"This is the verdict: Light has come into the world, but men loved darkness instead of light because their deeds were evil. Everyone who does evil*

<sup>7</sup> Godlessness/ungodliness = Asebia – refers to a lack of reverence for, devotion to, and worship of the true God.

<sup>8</sup> Unrighteousness = Adikia – "The negative form of dike, meaning justice. The idea implies that what is not conformable with justice, what out not to be, that which is wrong. In 1 Jn 5:17 'All unrighteousness (adikia) is sin (hamartia).' Whatever does not meet God's justice is missing God's justice or His goal for us. The result of adikia is adikema or evil doing." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>9</sup> "It is probable that this is the meaning of the verb in v. 18 also, especially since the object of this "revealing" is not people but the sins of people, or people as sinners: God's wrath is revealed "upon all godlessness and unrighteousness of human beings.".. Paul specifies two objects of God's wrath: "ungodliness" and "unrighteousness." NICNT

<sup>10</sup> ""Truth" in the NT is not simply something to which one must give mental assent; it is something to be done, to be obeyed. When people act sinfully, rebelling against God's just rule, they fail to embrace the truth and so suppress it." NICNT

*hates the light, and will not come into the light for fear that his deeds will be exposed."*

- For what can be known about God<sup>11</sup> – known = *gnostos/gnosis* from *ginosko*.<sup>12</sup> It means that mankind can, not just know about God from what He has revealed, but they can know Him personally by what He has revealed. He has revealed enough to know more than simply a fact of His existence. This is the factor that brings in accountability. If the ultimate judgment is based on relationship with God, than simply revealing enough to know ABOUT wouldn't be sufficient to hold us accountable. But Paul is explaining that God reveals Himself more deeply than that. He gives every one of us enough to know Him relationally. On the lightest level I can imagine that a human being experiencing a hurricane not only knows the facts that a Creator made a world with hurricane's but the sheer fury and force should reveal to a human being that there are forces beyond them and they need to submit to that authority. If God created something that ferocious, then how much greater is He? So, a human should have indicators about the nature of God beyond His simple existence.
- is plain to them, because God has shown it<sup>13</sup> to them. – It is blatantly obvious that this is God's world. God has given enough clues to man that it is absurd to deny His existence and immensity.
- For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power – Paul's saying, 'even the things about God that are invisible, for example His eternal power and divine nature...' In other words, we cannot claim ignorance because God's invisible to our eye and His nature is even more mysterious. We cannot see the inner workings of his eternal power, right?
- and divine nature, - Nor can we know about God's full divine nature and what God is ultimately like. Yet we cannot claim ignorance about even these deep truths of God because He compensated for that. How?

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<sup>11</sup> "They are "without excuse" (v. 20b). He accomplishes both purposes by asserting that people have been given a knowledge of God: "for what can be known<sup>55</sup> about God is manifest among them." For Jews, as Paul will acknowledge later (2:18, 20), this knowledge of God comes above all through the law of Moses. Here, however, he is interested in the knowledge of God available to all people through the nature of the world itself. Therefore, what Paul says in the following verses, though not limited to Gentiles (since Jews, too, have knowledge of God through nature), has particular relevance to them." NICNT

<sup>12</sup> "Thus, it could be said that *ginōskō* means to believe, for it is through faith that we come to love the Lord. Knowing God is certainly more than just knowing about Him (John 6:42; 7:28). It is knowing the relation that He has with the Father (John 10:38; 14:31ff.). He who knows God sees Him (John 14:7ff.). He who believes also knows (John 5:24; 6:60ff.) and he who knows believes (John 10:38; 14:20). Without faith one cannot know either initially or progressively (John 16:30; 17:7, 8)." Complete Word Study of the New Testament

<sup>13</sup> Made it plain = *Phaneroō* – "to make manifest, make known, show. In the NT synonym *apokalupto*, to reveal, take the lid off. Therefore, in this sense it means to denote the act of divine revelation. It refers to those to whom the revelation is made. It signifies also to make visible, to show; to make known; to make public." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

- have been clearly perceived,<sup>14</sup> - God didn't only reveal **His presence, nature, and works** to the elite, or the most educated, or those with special knowledge, or the super holy, no. He revealed enough of those aspects to all of mankind and has done so **CLEARLY**. Whether we refuse to look at it and acknowledge it or not is another thing, but we CAN. At the end of this document you can read through a few of J.P. Moreland's (apologist) favorite arguments for the existence of God.
- ever since the creation of the world<sup>15</sup> - **it's always been this way. There was never a time or season where God full hid Himself from mankind. The point was always to have relationship with mankind so why would God hide?** He is not resistant; He is the pursuer. But how can he do that with a rebellious, sinful people? It makes it tricky and He has to do so creatively and wisely, which leaves us feeling like He's obscuring Himself.
- in the things that have been made. – How did God reveal Himself and His nature so obviously? By the stuff made around us. **Simply the art on the canvas points to a painter.** The way that the art is revealed tells us something about the nature of the painter. It doesn't tell us everything but it tells us many things.
- So they are without excuse<sup>16</sup> - **Mankind, all of us, no matter who we are, are held accountable for our belief response.** God had dumbed it down for us so that all of us has a chance to know Him and engage with Him.
  - How people are saved – **responding to the revelation provided by God. God calls all people to Himself to the degree that they can understand. Their salvation is contingent on their affirmation of the**

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<sup>14</sup> "What is denoted is that God is powerful and that he possesses those properties normally associated with deity. These properties of God that cannot be "seen" (aorata) are "seen" (kathoratai)—an example of the literary device called oxymoron, in which a rhetorical effect is achieved by asserting something that is apparently contradictory. God in his essence is hidden from human sight, yet much of him and much about him can be seen through the things he has made. Paul is thinking primarily of the world as the product of God's creation (see, e.g., Ps. 8), though the acts of God in history may also be included. But just what does Paul mean when he claims that human beings "see" and "understand" from creation and history that a powerful God exists?... He asserts that people actually come to "understand" something about God's existence and nature. How universal is this perception? The flow of Paul's argument makes any limitation impossible. Those who perceive the attributes of God in creation must be the same as those who suppress the truth in unrighteousness and are therefore liable to the wrath of God. Paul makes clear that this includes all people (see 3:9, 19–20)." NICNT

Understood = Noeo – "to perceive, observe from nous (the mind). To perceive with thought coming into consciousness as distinct from the perception of senses. Synonym suniemi (to put it all together and make out its meaning). Noeo denotes independently the action of the mind or the heart. If the latter is used in referring to the mind, it means to understand, think, reflect." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

Perceived = noeo (related to the mind) = clearly observed through senses, understood and comprehended.

<sup>15</sup> World = Kosmos – "to set in order, adorn. That which pertains to space and not time. The sum total of the material universe, the beauty in it; the sum total of persons living in the world." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>16</sup> "But it is vital if we are to understand Paul's gospel and his urgency in preaching it to realize that natural revelation leads not to salvation but to the demonstration that God's condemnation is just: people are "without excuse." That verdict stands over the people we meet every day just as much as over the people Paul rubbed shoulders with in the first century, and our urgency in communicating the gospel should be as great as Paul's." NICNT

"It is sometimes said, 'Justice requires God to do this,' referring to some act we know He will perform. This is an error of thinking as well as of speaking, for it postulates a principle of justice outside of God which compels Him to act in a certain way. The thrust is that there is not and can never be anything outside of the nature of God which can move Him in the least degree. Justice, when used of God, is a name we give to the way God is, nothing more; and when God acts justly He is not doing so to conform to an independent criterion, but simply acting like Himself in a given situation. Everything in the universe is good to the degree it conforms to the nature of God and evil as it fails to do so." A. W. Tozer, Knowledge of the Holy

"Eternity in Their Hearts: Startling Evidence of belief in the One True God in Hundreds of Cultures Throughout the World." (Regal Books, Ventura, CA: 1978). It chronicles evidence that each of the main civilizations had some knowledge given to them in some way (whether passed down, prophesied to them directly, or given by an outsider) at some period.

presence of God in their lives. This accounts for babies, those born in other-religion countries (e.g. Muslim), special needs folks/children, aborigines in Australia that never heard the gospel, those born before Jesus Christ came, etc. **The saving will ALWAYS be done due to Christ**, but salvation is not limited from people who don't have intellect to understand facts.

- Not ignorance but suppression - The problem with this world is not that more men and women don't know about God. **The problem is that they don't want to know about God.** God said that if anyone seeks Him with all their heart they will find Him. That means regardless of our evangelistic plans. I evangelize to be used by God in His revelation plan and to remove obstacles in people's way out of love and helping them.
- Why Evangelize? - Yet, if this is so, then why do we need evangelists? Why do we need to share our faith with others if everyone gets a direct contact from God? There are two primary reasons: 1.) It could be that God uses evangelism as one of the primary WAYS that He contacts and communicates with people. 2.) People need to know what they are rejecting and what's at stake. We explain the bigger picture to people. That's our job as evangelistic believers. 3.) We help them understand God MORE so there is a greater DEPTH to the relational connection.
  - *"God will give a man a brain to smelt iron and make a hammer head and nails. God will grow a tree and give man strength to cut it down and brains to fashion a hammer handle from its wood. And when man has the hammer and the nails, God will put out His hand and let man drive nails through it and place Him on a cross in the supreme demonstration that men are without excuse."* Donald Grey Barnhouse.
- Swapping gods
  - Humanity switched worship from God to creation
    - *Romans 1:21-23 – "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. <sup>22</sup> Claiming to be wise, they became fools, <sup>23</sup> and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things."*
    - For although they knew God,<sup>17</sup> - here we have that word again: Knew = *ginosko*. It's why there is accountability. It means that mankind were given enough to know God experientially and personally...yet...

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<sup>17</sup> "Paul's claim that people through natural revelation "know" God is unexpected. Such language is normally confined to the intimate, personal relationship to God and Christ that is possible only for the believer. In light of the use to which this knowledge is put, this is plainly not the case here. "Knowing God" must therefore be given a strictly limited sense compatible with Paul's argument in this passage. But how limited?... People do have some knowledge of God. But this knowledge, Paul also makes clear, is limited, involving the narrow range of understanding of God available in nature: they "knew of God" (Phillips: "They knew all the time that there is a God"). The outward manifestation of God in his created works was met with a real, though severely limited, knowledge of him among those who observed those works. This limited knowledge of God falls far short of what is necessary to establish a relationship with him. Knowledge must lead to reverence and gratitude. This it has failed to do." NICNT

- they did not honor<sup>18</sup> him as God – they did not give God enough respect to submit or surrender or honor Him. They/We chose ourselves over Him. We ran to everything else that we wanted and could control instead of bending our knee to the rightful king of the universe.
- or give thanks<sup>19</sup> to him, - They/We didn't thank Him for what He did for them/us (breath of life, safety, etc.) and continued to do for them/us every day (breath, water, food, etc.). Instead of being thankful we ran away and created a new world of our making.
- but they became futile<sup>20</sup> in their thinking – When we ran away and cut God out of the center, we started to fall apart. To even get a clue to this universe, to reality **you must start with God**. To work Him out of the equation is to be left with insanity and meaninglessness. **As man fought to get God out of their lives they found they were left with no truth, no wisdom and the spiral downward began**. A Godless university is a very dark place indeed.
- and their foolish hearts<sup>21</sup> were darkened<sup>22</sup> – The Greek word for heart is all about the whole being especially the mind and will, as well as the affections. It means that not only did their thinking go to black, but so did all value, worth and understanding of their reality. The problem with darkness is that you cannot see to walk, plan, move forward, make sense of things, find meaning, change, etc. We are left to simply grope about or sit in our darkness.
- Claiming to be wise,<sup>23</sup> they became fools, - Mankind has always touted their brilliance and advancement. We are continually thinking that we are brighter and more impressive than prior generations (although much evidence exists to the contrary – pyramids). We claim to be growing smarter and smarter. **We claim to know what the universe and reality is all about. We reason amongst ourselves and group-confirm that we are**

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<sup>18</sup> "Honor = Doxazo – "from doxa, glory. To glorify from dokeo, esteem, think, be of opinion. The consequential meaning from the opinion which one forms is to recognize, honor, praise, invest with dignity, give anyone esteem or honor by putting him into an honorable position. In the NT meaning to recognize, honor, praise, to give anyone importance, make glorious, glorify." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>19</sup> Give Thanks = Eucharisteo – "to be thankful, to thank. In the NT, (except Rom 16:4) used in a religious sense with or without reference to God. In Luke's and Paul's writings, it is followed by God in the dative, to Theo. With the dative it always stands where there is implied a kindness done, a gave, a charis (grace), for an undeserved gift received where it appears as thanks for any good experience. Thankfully to praise God for something or someone." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>20</sup> Became futile = Mataioo – "to make vain or worthless. In the passive mataioomai, to become vain, destitute of real wisdom, to be perverse, foolish, or act perversely, foolishly. In reality, to get off the right path, to follow foolish or bad courses." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>21</sup> Hearts = Kardia – "heart. The strictures attributed to the heart thoughts, reasonings, understanding, will, judgment, designs, affections, love, hatred, fear, joy, sorrow and anger since these things can actually affect a man's physical heart. Therefore, the heart is used for the mind in general; the understanding (as Rom 1:21); The will; the memory; the intention, affection, or desire; the conscience." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>22</sup> "In the NT, "heart" is broad in its meaning, denoting "the thinking, feeling, willing ego of man, with particular regard to his responsibility to God." We can understand, then, how Paul can describe the heart as being "without understanding" and recognize also how comprehensive is this description of fallen humanity. At the very center of every person, where the knowledge of God, if it is to have any positive effects, must be embraced, there has settled a darkness—a darkness that only the light of the gospel can penetrate." NICNT

<sup>23</sup> Wise = Sophos – "derived probably from the Heb. Sophim, signifying watchmen. The Greeks apparently derived their Sophia from this sophim. In the OT these watchmen used to ascend to the mountains so that they might see all around, but in the absence of mountains, the Greeks just observed the course and motions of the heavens and called themselves sophoi. Therefore, in this basic meaning sophos is the one who know how to regulate his course in view of movements of the heavens or of God. NT meanings: wise, as applied both to God and man both in respect of truth. And also used of false or worldly wisdom." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

right. The problem is that when we cut out God we lost all chance of making sense of the universe, messed up our formula for life, and ended up foolish, clueless, and ignorant.

- Psalm 14:1 & 53:1 *"The fool says in his heart, 'there is no God.' They are corrupt, their deeds are vile; there is no one who does good."*
- 1 Cor 1:18, 20, 25; 2:2 *"For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God. Where is the wise man? Where is the scholar? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? For the foolishness of God is wiser than man's wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than man's strength. For I resolved to know nothing while I was with you except Jesus Christ and him crucified."*
- *"It is quite possible for humans to claim that doing one thing is good and wise, and doing the opposite is bad and foolish – and to be exactly wrong. This doesn't mean that all moral standards are relative,, that it's simply a matter of cultural preferences. Rather, it's a sign that we do indeed very easily deceive ourselves, especially where our own interest and desires are concerned."* NT Wright, Romans for Everyone.
- and exchanged<sup>24</sup> the glory<sup>25</sup> of the immortal<sup>26</sup> God – **In the end we found ourselves without meaning and it demanded** (due to the void in the heart of mankind) **that we have some god to worship.** We crave a deity that can help us have **meaning** and provide us **security**. We want to have a world where provision can come at any time. We deeply desire **miracles** to give us **hope**. But if you take the real God out, then we find ourselves creating false gods to fill the void. We are trading out the one God who can really help. We are **trading out the King of Kings for something so far lesser**. We are trading out the immortal for the mortal. It's an unfathomable downgrade.

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<sup>24</sup> Exchanged = Allasso – "or allatto, to change; transform; exchange (as in Rom 1:23)." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>25</sup> "Glory" signifies the splendor and majesty that belong intrinsically to the one true God. ...The Greek is δόξα. In secular Greek, the word means "opinion," "judgment," "estimation" (cf. LSJ). But the LXX translators used it for the Heb. כְּבוֹד, and it is through this correspondence that its typical NT sense develops. From its basic meaning "be weighty," כְּבוֹד came to denote the "honor" or "importance" or "prestige" of people (e.g., Ps. 49:16; Isa. 16:14; cf. Matt. 4:8) and, when applied to God, his "weighty" and magnificent presence—as revealed in nature (Ps. 97:1–6), the tabernacle (Exod. 40:34), and the climax of history, to all peoples (Isa. 40:5; 66:18) (see G. von Rad, TDNT II, 238–42). John claims that this eschatological manifestation of God's glory has taken place in the person of the Word-become-flesh (John 1:14)." NICNT

The glory = Doxa – "glory. The meanings of this word divide themselves conformably with the use of the verb dokeo, to think, recognize for what a person or a thing is. Thus, doxa can mean appearance, reputation, glory. Basically, in the Bible it refers to the recognition belonging to a person, honor, renown. The predominant meaning is recognition. May denote appearance, form, aspect, that appearance of a person or thing which catches the eye or attracts attention, commanding recognition, looking like something; thus equivalent to splendor, brilliance, glory attracting the gaze which makes it a strong synonym of eikon, image. Doxa embraces all which is excellent in the divine nature, coinciding with His self-revelation. It comprises all that God will appear to be in His final revelation to us." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

"glory = God's unique majesty which fallen mankind has lost sight of and for which they have substituted deities of their own devising, patterned after various creatures." NIV Commentary.

<sup>26</sup> Immortal = Apathartos – "Incorruptible, not capable of corruption. In Rom 1:23 Paul calls God apthartos, incorruptible, an attribute of deity that even the heathen recognize. Distinguished from athanatos, immortal. When predicated of God, apthartos means that He is exempt from the wear, waste, and final perishing which characterize the present body of man." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

- for images<sup>27</sup> resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things - Mankind willingly rejected God but in that vacuum still needed something to worship and something that would make them feel protected. The problem was the control issue. They wanted something that would do their bidding but was also feels very powerful. Since nothing like that exists, they make them up in the form of gods and goddesses throughout history. And **no matter what type of god you form it has to be within our imagination which means we usually form earthly aspects and elements into something.** We have gods that are half-man and half-beast. Why? It's what we can imagine. We have crazy looking deities but they are always within our scope of imagination, which is temporal, earthly, limited, human. So it looks like earth stuff.
  - Ex 20:3-5 *"You shall have no other gods before me. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God."*
- How do we determine what is right and wrong? What is Truth? – **is it based on the best we can determine by our advancement in science and philosophy?** Does that make it a shifting bar? **Or is it based on God's Word, the Creator?** Is our reality shaped and built upon God's nature, or are we in a universe of relative truth? At some point we need to make that call not just for ourselves but the platform on which we stand and try to shape the world around us. Much of society has chosen to be make it up as we go and therefore tolerance wins the day (because who really knows what's right and who's right?). But the Christian community continues to argue in favor of a Biblical worldview and God-centered foundation. Discerning God's will is more likely than mankind 'discovering' the secrets of the universe without help.
- We become what we worship – **if we worship God we will lean toward forming into His nature. If we worship people we will become more like them.** If we worship human intellect or reason, then we will be shaped by what comes out of philosophers. If we worship ourselves we are simply spinning in shifting sand.
  - The point of idolatry is that it's not God – idolatry means **something else is in the place of God.** It's not so much a concern as to WHAT the

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<sup>27</sup> "The second commandment was unique in the world of its day, and the failure of archaeology to unearth a figure of Yahweh (while idols abounded in every other religion) shows its fundamental place in Israel's religion from Mosaic days...The main forms of idolatry into which Israel fell were the use of graven and molten images pillars, the asherah and teraphim. The masseka, or molten image, was made by casting metal in a mould and shaping it with a tool (Ex 32:4, 24). There is some doubt whether this figure, and the later calves made by Jeroboam, were intended to represent Yahweh, or were thought of as a pedestal over which he was enthroned. The analogy of the cherubim (cf. 2 Sa 6:2) suggest the latter. The OT polemic against idolatry, carried on chiefly by prophets and psalmists, recognizes the same two truths which Paul was later to affirm: that the idol was nothing, but that nevertheless there was a demonic spiritual force to be reckoned with, and that the idol therefore constituted a positive spiritual menace (Is 44:6-20; 1 Cor 8:4; 10:19-20). Thus, the idol is nothing at all: man made it (Is 2:8); its very composition and construction proclaims its futility (Is 40:18-20; 41:6-7; 44:9-20). The prophets derisively named them gillulim (Ez 6:4, and at least 38 other times in Ezekiel) or 'dung pellets' and lilim, 'godlets.'" (New Bible Dictionary, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition).

Image = Eikon – "from eiko, to be like, resemble. A bodily representation, an image as of a man made of gold, silver or whatever (Rom 1:23). A monarch's likeness impressed on a coin. Eikon, always assumes a prototype, that which it not merely resembles but from which it is drawn. Homoioma is the result, the likeness or resemblance." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

object or item is, but that it's in God's spot. It could be an idol of wood, stone, or gold. OR, it could be money, sex, or power. Regardless it's in the wrong spot and will make things go awry.

- *"Among the sins to which the human heart is prone, hardly any other is more hateful to God than idolatry, for idolatry is at bottom a libel on His character. The idolatrous heart assumes that God is other than He is and substitutes for the true God one made after its own likeness."* A. W. Tozer, Knowledge of the Holy.
  - The cost of idolatry – if mankind is made in the image of God, idols are made in the image of mankind<sup>28</sup> (it can only be designed by what we can imagine and understand to some degree – which makes it far too limited to be sufficient). This results in us being formed as lesser than what we were created for...less human.
  - The danger of human 'advancement' – The greatest danger in human advancement is that **it will never get us to know what God knows**. If Jesus tarries for another 20,000 years, we will never reach a God-level of wisdom. Since we didn't create the universe we cannot know why it's here or discover it's meaning without God. So, at the end of the day it's never going to be enough. We will be perpetually lost.
  - **Why Eve failed but Jesus succeeded against Satan** – There were two great temptations in the Bible: The temptation of Eve and the temptation of Christ. They were both in direct contact and conversation with Satan himself. They ended drastically different. What was the determining factor? Obedience vs. reason. Eve was super smart. She thought through the scenario and couldn't see how it would go wrong. She determined, through her wisdom and intelligence, that eating the fruit would end up as a benefit. It did not. Jesus Christ, on the other hand didn't reason or argue anything. With each temptation He had the same response: the Bible says X, and I'm not going to debate it with you. He didn't 'lean into His own understanding', which btw would be the best understanding on the planet – even better than Adam and Eve's (due to the time He was born into humanity's revelation of God and the greater depth of understanding with the Father). He had one response: the Father told me no. That's it. One saved mankind and the other one doomed us.
- Open the Gate!
    - God let us run with our sin
      - *Romans 1:24-25 – "Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves,<sup>25</sup> 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."*

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<sup>28</sup> "the human race as a whole worships parts of the world rather than God himself...if we choose idolatry we must expect our humanness, bit by bit, to dissolve." NT Wright, Romans for Everyone

- Therefore<sup>29</sup> – Again, here’s a word to reflect on what was said before. Therefore...since...mankind traded out God and created false gods of their own making...
- God gave them up<sup>30</sup> - God said, ‘**have it your way** and we’ll see how that turns out.’ God handed them over to themselves. He let us play out our scenario. Just like letting Adam and Eve eat the fruit and find themselves naked, exposed, untrustworthy, with an ultimately damaged homelife and start to humanity, God let the rest of us do the same. **It’s one thing to keep telling someone not to do something and explaining the dangers. It’s another thing to let them learn it on their own and discover why God’s way was the right way.**
- Why does God ‘give up<sup>31</sup>?’ – First of all I don’t think God really ‘gives up.’ I think that God, ‘hands over’ for the purpose of learning and restoring. God doesn’t get exhausted with us and say, ‘forget it. I can’t handle it anymore.’ He’s too inexhaustible for that. But He will say, enough is enough, you need to figure this out. It’s like a sheep that keeps running the fence to try to get out and you let it out to figure out how dangerous the world is outside the fences. It’s like Paul casting the sinful man out of the church to learn his lesson.
  - 1 Co 5:1–5 - *It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father’s wife. <sup>2</sup> And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you. <sup>3</sup> For though absent in body, I am present in spirit; and as if present, I have already pronounced judgment on the one who did such a thing. <sup>4</sup> When you are assembled in the name of the Lord Jesus and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus, <sup>5</sup> you are to deliver this man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord.” (cf. 1 Tim 1:20)*

<sup>29</sup> “The “therefore” at the beginning of this verse shows that God’s “handing over” of human beings is his response to their culpable rejection of the knowledge of himself that he has made generally available (vv. 21–23).” NICNT

<sup>30</sup> “Paul’s use of the verb “hand over” to describe this retribution has its roots in the OT, where it is regularly used in the stereotyped formula according to which God “hands over” Israel’s enemies so that they may be defeated in battle. And, in an ironic role reversal, the same formula is used when God hands his own people over to another nation as punishment for their sins. Somewhat similarly, Paul here alleges that God has “handed over” people to “uncleanness.” What does Paul mean by this? Clearly he cannot be saying that God impelled people to sin. Not only would this contradict the biblical depiction of God (cf. Jas. 1:13), but the phrase that qualifies this “handing over to uncleanness,” “in the passions of their hearts,” shows that those who were handed over were already immersed in sin. Paul’s purpose in this verse is to highlight the divine side of the cycle of sin; but it must be balanced with the human side, presented in Eph. 4:19, where Paul says that Gentiles “gave themselves up” to licentiousness, leading to all kinds of “uncleanness.”<sup>92</sup> Dodd, in keeping with his interpretation of God’s wrath, thinks the “handing over” is no more than the outworking of the natural processes of history. But so impersonal a procedure does justice neither to the biblical teaching about God’s sovereign activity in history nor to Paul’s active language. Chrysostom interprets this handing over in a passive sense: by withdrawing his influence over these disobedient idolaters, God permits them to continue in, and indeed to plunge more deeply into, the sin they had already chosen. As Godet puts it: “He [God] ceased to hold the boat as it was dragged by the current of the river.” No doubt such a withdrawal of divine influence would produce this result. But the meaning of “hand over” demands that we give God a more active role as the initiator of the process. God does not simply let the boat go—he gives it a push downstream. Like a judge who hands over a prisoner to the punishment his crime has earned, God hands over the sinner to the terrible cycle of ever-increasing sin.” NICNT

<sup>31</sup> “Is this punishment reformatory in purpose? Chrysostom thought so; the depths of sin in which the idolater is plunged are designed to awaken the sinner to the awful seriousness of his or her situation.<sup>96</sup> In that God’s handing over of his people in the OT was not the final word, and in light of the possible parallel to this action in the temporary confining of Israel under sin through the law (Gal. 3:21–25), this might be the case. But it must be added that both biblical and secular history afford us many examples in which such punishment has not led to spiritual reformation...Note Wis. 11:15–16: “In return for their [the Gentiles’] foolish and wicked thoughts, which led them astray to worship irrational serpents and worthless animals, you sent upon them a multitude of irrational creatures to punish them, that they might learn that one is punished by the very things by which he sins.” NICNT

- in the lusts<sup>32</sup> of their hearts to impurity<sup>33, 34</sup> - what was the test? What was the laboratory of learning? What did humanity get handed over to in order to see the overwhelming wisdom of God? They/We were handed over to ourselves and **our passions and lusts**. Lust just means intense desire and can be good or bad depending on the subject of our desire. In this case it's the desire to do things 'unclean', not holy, wrong, wicked, sinful. If we really wanted to reject God then we only can pursue things that are 'not-God', which means not-good. So **God let us chase after those things so we could see what results**.
- to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, - what is a good example of us pursuing passions that are apart from God's will? It would be **using our bodies improperly. It would be feeding our cravings**. It would be throwing temperance out and replacing it with addiction. It would be harming ourselves and others. It would mean mutually agreeing to use one another. It would be debasing ourselves and others.
- because they exchanged the truth<sup>35</sup> about God for a lie – why would we want to do these things? Because we un-anchored from God's truth and **we began to live a lie**. We began to live lies like: **it doesn't matter what I do**. It doesn't matter who I hurt. It doesn't matter who I think I am and who I pursue to be. It doesn't matter what or who I love. It doesn't matter what I worship. And the list goes on. We traded Truth for a Lie.
- and worshiped<sup>36</sup> and served<sup>37</sup> the creature rather than the Creator<sup>38</sup> - Worshiped means, bowed down to, submitted to, gave credit to, honored, etc. Served means - Did things for, submitted for, gave over to, catered to, etc. We shifted our worship and focus from God to earthly things. We began to pour our energies and resources into temporal stuff, earthly stuff, rather than heavenly, eternal stuff. **All of our energy was expended on a different target**.
  - *"Sin has many manifestations but its essence is one. A moral being, created to worship before the throne of God, sits on the throne of his own selfhood and from that elevated position declares, 'I AM.' 'What*

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<sup>32</sup> Sinful desires/lust – the word lust is neutral (same word as Christ lusting to have last mean with disciples; and lusting after a bishops position is craving a noble job in 1<sup>st</sup> Timothy). Lust = craving. It all depends on what you crave. (Eckman)

<sup>33</sup> Impurity = Akatharsia – “from the neg. a, and kathairo, to cleanse. Uncleaness, filth, in a natural or physical sense; moral uncleaness, lewdness, incontinence in general; any kind of uncleaness different from whoredom; any unnatural pollution, whether acted out by oneself, or with another.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>34</sup> “Gk. ἀκαθαρσία. The only literal use in the NT is Matt. 23:27; the others, which are all in Paul, refer generally to immorality, and esp. sexual immorality (see Murray; Rom. 6:19; 2 Cor. 12:21; Gal. 5:19; Eph. 4:19; 5:3; Col. 3:5; 1 Thess. 2:3; 4:7).” NICNT

<sup>35</sup> Truth = Alethei – “truth, as the unveiled reality lying at the basis of and agreeing with an appearance; the manifested, the veritable essence of matter. The reality pertaining to an appearance. Denotes the reality clearly lying before our eyes.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>36</sup> Worshipped = Sebazomai – “from sebo or sebomai, to worship religiously. Denotes not merely the act of pious reverence, but the act or acts of worship.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>37</sup> Served = Latreuo – “to serve; in a religious sense to worship God, or creatures. It refers particularly to the performing of the Levitical service. Therefore, to serve or worship but not out of compulsion.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>38</sup> Creator = Ktizo – “from ktazo, or ktaomai, in the passive or mid, to possess. In Homer the word meant to found a city or a habitable place. NT meanings: to create, to produce from nothing; to form out of preexistent matter; to make, compose; to create and form in a spiritual sense, regeneration or renewal.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

*shall we do?’ is the deep heart cry of every man who suddenly realizes that he is a usurper and sits on a stolen throne.” A. W. Tozer*

- who is blessed<sup>39</sup> forever! Amen – We gave up **our great God, who** Paul says, is **‘worthy to be praise’** (a better translation) forever. May it be so, is what Amen means.
  - Unanchored reality – when we un-anchor from God and His Word, we begin to freefall. There is no other standard that will hold up. **We will spiral into a chaotic state where we are all just making stuff up. With no EXTERNAL law, we are left to everyone’s own INTERNAL law,** which will be more or less healthy depending on the individual.
  - Trading out God – the bottom line for Paul is that trading out God has **disastrous consequences and leads to the unraveling of society,** which we have seen even in our own nation and in our lifetime.
- Unchecked Passion
  - Wrestling with homosexuality
    - *Romans 1:26-27 – “For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature;<sup>27</sup> 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.”*
    - For this reason – Again, we have a purpose statement that is highlighting what was just talked about. It means, ‘since.’ Since God handed over mankind to themselves and they began to pursue their own cravings...
    - God gave them up<sup>40</sup> to dishonorable passions<sup>41</sup> – In light of man’s rebellion against God, He said, “okay” and let them go. He handed

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<sup>39</sup> Blessed = Eulogetos – “blessed, derived from eulogeo from eu, good or well, and lego, to speak; to bless or more accurately to speak well of, to eulogize. It has the meaning of ‘worthy to be praised,’ and is in all instances ascribed to God. No one is inherently worthy of praise except God.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>40</sup> “The word for handing over is the same word as Judas handing Christ over to the religious leaders. God in effect said since you don’t want me, I will hand you over to You, without me. I will hand you over to your appetites. God refused to be there. God refuses to put the Holy Spirit into one who refuses Christ. God basically said, ‘okay.’” (David Eckman)

“Gave over = Paradidomi – an intense verb of handing someone or something over. God’s divine over sinful mankind has a dual sense. First, in an indirect sense God gave them over simply by withdrawing his restraining and protective hand, allowing the consequences of sin to take their inevitable, destructive course. Like an untended garden, when man is left to himself the bad always chokes out the good because that is the inclination of his fallen nature. Man has no capacity in himself to restrain the weeds of his sinfulness or to cultivate the good produce of righteousness. When men persistently abandon God, God will abandon them. When God abandons men to their own devices, His divine protection is partially withdrawn. Sin degrades man, debases the image of God in which he is made, and strips him of dignity, peace of mind, and a clear conscience. Sin destroys personal relationships, marriages, families, cities and nations. But not all of God’s wrath is future. He pours out his wrath in the forms of the loneliness, frustration, meaninglessness, anxiety, and despair that are so characteristic of modern society. In a second, direct sense God gave over rebellious mankind by specific acts of judgment (ex: flood and Sodom & Gomorrah).” MacArthur.

<sup>41</sup> “And that to which they are handed over, “dishonorable passions,” here corresponds to the “uncleanness” of v. 24. Paul’s use of the word “passions,” combined with what he says in vv. 26b–27, makes clear that he refers to illicit sexual passions. For the last clause of the verse illustrates these “dishonorable passions.” NICNT

Passions = Pathos – “passion (condition); from petho, to wound, hurt, to suffer. Pathos occurs three times in the NT; The third reference (Rom 1:26) speaking of vile affections. These are lusts that dishonor those who indulge in them. Pathos is the soul’s diseased condition out of which the various lusts spring.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

“Shameful lusts means ‘dishonorable moods.’ The word ‘moods’ = strong, internal, emotions. It means inundated with powerful emotions that are not of the fruit of the Spirit. If you tie the mood definition with the context of sexual lust you have a dishonorable sexual atmosphere (eroticism). What is left is ‘painful emotions.’ This is a sense of deprivation and need but not target for fulfillment.” (Eckman)

them over to themselves. If man didn't want Him, they would get what they want. And He gave mankind over to **destructive choices**. God allowed them to indulge themselves. He didn't stop them. **Harmful sexuality** became worshipped, and they experienced the ramifications of their choices. They knew that what they were doing was wrong but chose it anyways then celebrated those who followed. The term dishonorable passions means 'harmful lusts.' It means that it is damaging activity.

- Psalm 81:11-12 *"But my people would not listen to me; Israel would not submit to me. So I gave them over to their stubborn heart to follow their own devices."*
- Hosea 4:17 *"Ephraim is joined to idols; leave him alone!"*
- Judges 10:13-14 *"But you have forsaken me and served other gods, so I will no longer save you. Go and cry out to the gods you have chosen. Let them save you when you are in trouble!"*
- For their women<sup>42</sup> exchanged<sup>43</sup> natural relations<sup>44</sup> for those that are contrary to nature;<sup>45</sup> - The first example Paul uses is lesbianism. This is the **only direct reference to lesbianism** in the Bible btw. Even the females (who are not driven by the same sexual urge as men) **exchanged their means of fulfillment** (from proper to improper) and were driven into lesbianism, which goes **against how they were created to be and do**. The violation of same sex sexuality is that God's image is marred. In Rabbinic thought God's image is shown in man and women in relation to one another. The violation of that leads to collapse of identity.

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<sup>42</sup> Women = Thelus – “from thele, the nipple of a woman’s breast which Plato deduces from thallo, to thrive, because it has this effect on the child. The adjective thelus, female or woman, is used in the feminine, in Rom 1:26 and in the neut in Mt 19:4 and others.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

“Women = theleia – “female.” “Paul does not use gune, the usual term for women, but rather theleia, which simply means female.” MacArthur Commentary

<sup>43</sup> Exchanged = metallasso – “from meta denoting change of condition and allasso to change. To exchange, to convert from one state to another.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>44</sup> “In yet another similarity to Jewish criticisms of the Gentile world, the sexual sin that Paul singles out is homosexuality: “women exchanged the natural use of their bodies for that use which is against nature.” The verb “exchange,” which has been used twice to depict the fall into idolatry (vv. 23, 25), is now used to characterize this tragic reversal in sexual practice. The “natural use” has been replaced with one that is “against nature.” NICNT

“(The main problem with homosexuality) is that man and woman are made in the image of God. The feminine characteristics of the godhead were poured into women. The masculine characteristics of the godhead were poured into men. God is isolating this particular issue (lesbianism & homosexuality) merely to illustrate the confusion of not knowing God.” (Eckman)

<sup>45</sup> “The extent to which Paul characterizes this exchange as a violation of God’s created order depends on the significance of the words “natural” and “nature” in this verse. Paul generally uses the word “nature” to describe the way things are by reason of their intrinsic state or birth, and in these cases there is no clear reference to divine intention. Some scholars in recent years especially, noting this, have argued that Paul does not here brand homosexuality as a violation of God’s will. He is only, they argue, following his own cultural prejudices by characterizing homosexual relations as being against what is “usually” the case.<sup>117</sup> But Paul’s use of the word “nature” in this verse probably owes much to Jewish authors, particularly Philo, who included sexual morality as part of “natural law” and therefore as a divine mandate applicable to all people. Violations of this law, as in the case of Sodom, are therefore considered transgressions of God’s will.<sup>119</sup> In keeping with the biblical and Jewish worldview, the heterosexual desires observed normally in nature are traced to God’s creative intent. Sexual sins that are “against nature” are also, then, against God, and it is this close association that makes it probable that Paul’s appeal to “nature” in this verse includes appeal to God’s created order. Confirmation can be found in the context. In labeling the turning from “the natural use” to “that [use] which is against nature” an “exchange,” Paul associates homosexuality with the perversion of true knowledge of God already depicted in vv. 23 and 25. In addition, we must remember that the clause in question is a description of “sinful passions,” a phrase plainly connoting activities that are contrary to God’s will. When these factors are considered, it is clear that Paul depicts homosexual activity as a violation of God’s created order, another indication of the departure from true knowledge and worship of God.” NICNT

- and the men likewise gave up natural relations<sup>46</sup> with women<sup>47</sup> and were consumed with passion<sup>48</sup> for one another, - In a similar way the men began to commit homosexual acts with one another and were further inflamed in their harmful lusts. The term Paul uses is 'burning with lust.' It's specifically an **unchecked sexual urge** being discussed.
- men committing shameless acts with men<sup>49</sup> – this is Paul trying to be more clear on what he's talking about when it comes to homosexuality with men. '**Shameless acts' are those that everyone knew were 'wrong' but they did it anyway and didn't feel bad about it. They were arrogantly pursuing what they wanted to do.**
- and receiving in themselves the due<sup>50</sup> penalty for their error<sup>51</sup> - it is **not clear** to what Paul is referring to by a 'due penalty'. No one knows to this day. What seems to make most sense to me is that **when we have our sexuality mar our identity, we lose ourselves** and things that we once held tightly for traction in life starts to slip. **We begin to unravel.** We would like to think that we can DO anything and still know who we are, but that's not true. One affects the other. When we begin to see an unraveling of expectations, or roles, of relationship, of interaction, of design, we lose something precious deep down inside. Most LGBTQ I have ever met have a sense of unfulfillment in self. They would argue that is because society doesn't accept or embrace, or work with them properly, and some of that is true. However, I think a bigger part is that sinful human beings (which we all are) are already on a slippery slope of contentment and when we further alter core aspects of ourselves we cannot find true peace.
  - The context of homosexuality here – it's important to note in this passage there is a very specific context that we can discern. The phrases, "gave up", "consumed with passion", and "committing" demonstrate that this is talking about sexual choices due to unchecked passions. That is different than any discussion about SSA attraction at birth, committed homosexual relationships, identity issues, or gender issues. Paul is coming in strong on the people who

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<sup>46</sup> "In rejection of God there is a loss of gender understanding. In knowing God aright we feel good and right about ourselves and our gender...Lesbianism and homosexuality is shown to be a directionless eroticism. On account of such a tremendous shift in mindset they were handed over." (Eckman)

<sup>47</sup> "This verse is connected to the last part of v. 26 with "likewise," as Paul shows that the same "sinful passions" that lead women to engage in unnatural homosexual acts are also operative among men, with similar effect. Homosexuality among "males," like that among "females," is characterized as a departure from nature.<sup>124</sup> As in the previous verse, "nature" denotes the natural order, but as reflective of God's purposes." NICNT

<sup>48</sup> Desire = Orexis – "appetite, lust or concupiscence. It is always the reaching out after and toward an object with the purpose of drawing it to itself and appropriating it." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>49</sup> "Paul uses strong language to characterize male homosexuality: "they burned in their desire<sup>126</sup> for one another, men with men doing<sup>128</sup> that which is shameful and receiving in themselves the just penalty<sup>130</sup> that was necessary for their error." In calling the homosexual activity that brings about this penalty an "error," Paul does not diminish the seriousness of the offense, for this word often denotes sins of unbelievers in the NT." NICNT

<sup>50</sup> Due = Dei – "must, necessary in the nature of things. An unavoidable, urgent compulsion, necessity." (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>51</sup> "In claiming that this penalty for homosexual practice is received "in themselves," Paul may suggest that the sexual perversion itself is the punishment. On the other hand, this could be a vivid way of saying that those who engage in such activities will suffer eternal punishment; they will receive "in their own persons" God's penalty for violation of his will.<sup>133</sup> This punishment, Paul says, was "necessary," by which he probably means that God could not allow his created order to be so violated without there being a just punishment." NICNT

have allowed their passion to drive them. So, let's begin there. The other issues are in the 'application' layer of study and seeing how this passage informs those, but the immediate context is about holding mankind accountable for letting lust control them. I think we would all agree that would be wrong and damaging. This would be examples of Nero (who was bisexual) being bored with regular sex and wanting a boy to spend the night with. This would be a modern day similar situation. It may be about women who trade out men because they are tired of the drama and hurt, but the context is passionate sexual drive so that would be more so a woman who is caught up in sexual activity with other women.

- **Discussing Homosexuality as a whole** – What does this passage say about LGBTQ as a whole? What can we learn from this passage that informs the rest, if anything? It is actually this passage here that is the primary reason why we are not an affirming church. It provides the clearest indicator that homosexual activity is not God's best, nor His design. The other passages use strange words (in Greek) that complicate the matter, but this one, along with the biblical foundation of God's creation, seal the deal for us. But not being affirming only tells a tiny part of the story. What about the rest?
  - **The Image of God issue** – At the end of the day everything we talk about is less important (including our identity) than how things reflect on God. He is the center. The main issue of LGBTQ is that it says something about the nature of God. It doesn't reflect what He created rightly. It is a human answer to a human question. I understand that struggle. I understand that confusion and the questions. I understand that agony. What I'm saying is that it's out of alignment with God's initial creation intent.
  - **Identity vs. sexual interests** – We are currently talking about sexual interests instead of gender identity. There is no reference to the "T" in LGBTQ – trans. That would be handled by different passages other than this one.
  - **HSA vs. SSA** – The Bible makes a distinction between activity/actions and temptation/desire. There is no condemnation for those who are Same Sex Attracted (SSA). It is what it is and the question is what do we do with it. The same is true of heterosexual issues. There's no condemnation more a man being attracted to a woman that's not his wife. It is what it is. The point is what are you going to do with it? Is it going to turn into lust (which is not sexual attraction btw)? Is it going to turn into action? The same with homosexual attraction. But the accountability comes into play with what we decide to do about the urges. The accountability is about Homosexual Sexual Activity. That is not affirmed by God.
  - **Bridgeway's Distinctive** – non affirming but understanding, intensely loving, patient and kind.

- Arrogance vs. struggle – there’s a difference in approach. All true Christians should see themselves struggle to align with God’s nature. It means submitting what we want to do, who we think we are, what works for us, into His hands for Him to determine those things. I struggle more with LGBTQ folks who are arrogant, although I understand the pride movement of being bullied. What I’m always looking for is a people wanting what’s right, wanting God’s will for their lives, and seeing how that can be true with them personally. I have a lot of people in this church who struggle with SSA. They are precious and I pray for them continually because it’s difficult.
  - Is homosexuality a choice?<sup>52</sup> – **Yes and No**. As mentioned there are those who are simply attracted to the same sex and it has nothing to do with choice. There are others who like to experiment and pursue it from a sexual gratification aspect and there is choice in that. It all depends on which aspect we are talking about. I don’t believe in a broad brush answer to any LGBTQ issue. It’s too complex and nuanced. If there is trauma that caused SSA, then challenging them and condemning them makes it worse. If it’s environmental and increased due to wanting to be loved there is more accountability. It’s messy.
  - Committed relationships vs. sexual exploits – The passage here doesn’t directly address SSA people who are wanting to honor the Lord in their committed relationships. It’s talking about sexual exploits. But it does inform about all forms of homosexual lifestyle.
- A Bottomless Pit
    - Humanity fell headlong into chaos
      - *Romans 1:28-31 – “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. <sup>29</sup> They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, <sup>30</sup> slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, <sup>31</sup> foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”*

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<sup>52</sup> “Yes and No. It is my understanding from what I have gathered in Scripture, counseling, books, research, etc., that certain people are born with certain proclivities/tendencies (i.e. depression, alcoholism, anger, etc.). Homosexuality is one of those tendencies that a person can be born with. Likewise, a person can have their sexual identity confused from birth by his/her environment, regardless of tendency. With that tendency and/or loss of identity, what the person does with that is their own choice. There is also the homosexual that at some point selected to go that route due to rejection, anger, sexual fulfillment, etc. (the last type rarely stays in the homosexual lifestyle). Let’s get a few things clear. Even though it appears to be en vogue, most kids don’t want to be homosexual/gay/lesbian/bisexual. They wish it was another way. It’s a miserable way to live. It’s hard, lonely, scary, odd, etc. Likewise, many homosexuals may not have just made a choice to jump into that lifestyle, they may feel honestly that they were born that way and any attempts to force them out of it without dealing with the identity issue is both rude and wrong. Homosexuality is a very complicated issue and should not be painted over with a simplistic brush. They are regular hurting individuals whom God demands that we love. Just because it’s odd or distasteful to you, doesn’t mean that it is inherently worse than any other sins. Yes, it is an abomination to God, but so is the pride that has led many to point out that verse.” (My thoughts in 2003 during a sermon on this topic)

- And since they did not see fit to<sup>53</sup> acknowledge<sup>54</sup> God, - Since mankind didn't think there was any benefit of following and honoring God.
- God gave them up to – God let us do it our way and we spiraled out of control in every possible area of life. We began to do what we wanted, what we thought was best, and what our intentions wanted us to do. What was the result? **21 aspects of sin's manifestation in people:**
  - **Everyone's in on the wickedness** – we will see next week that Paul follows up this passage with a command not to **judge** others because we are in it too. Part of the reason for such a long list of issues (below) is to gather in everyone who thinks they are the good guys looking from the outside in. No one should leave a message like this feeling great about their actions, behaviors, choices, or hearts. No human is necessarily better in quality than another.
  - a debased<sup>55</sup> mind<sup>56</sup> – debased mind means **a mind that can no longer distinguish from right and wrong and ultimately ends up being worthless.**
    - The Foundation for Sin – wrong base. Inability to make a wise godly decision because starting from the wrong base.
      - 2 Cor 4:4 *"The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God."*
  - to do what ought not to be done. – And we ended up doing stuff we never should have been doing. God made us perfect human beings to be a blessing to one another and history and the present demonstrates we have been living as anything but.
  - They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness,<sup>57</sup> - it means we were **filled with bad thoughts and let those thoughts turn into actions to hurt other people.**

<sup>53</sup> Think it worthwhile = Dokimazo – “to try, prove, discern, distinguish, approve. It has the notion of proving a thing whether it be worthy to be received or not. That which endures the test. Something good is expected of every dokime, trial, proof. To prove or bring forth the good in us or to make us good.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>54</sup> Acknowledge = echo – to have and to hold on to (continued possession).

<sup>55</sup> Depraved = Adokimos – “unapproved, unworthy, from the neg. a and dokimos, Spurious, worthless. In a passive sense, disapproved, rejected, cast away. In the act, sense, undiscerning, not distinguishing, void of judgment (Rom 1:28); although in this text it may be understood in the passive, a reprobate, abominable mind, a mind to be abhorred by God and man.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>56</sup> “For the third time Paul describes God's response to people's spurning of him with the words “God handed them over” (cf. also vv. 24, 26). Whereas in the previous instances it was to immoral acts that God consigned people, in this case it is to a “worthless mind.” People who have refused to acknowledge God end up with minds that are “disqualified” from being able to understand and acknowledge the will of God. The result, of course, is that they do things that are “not proper.” As in 1:21, Paul stresses that people who have turned from God are fundamentally unable to think and decide correctly about God and his will. This tragic incapacity is the explanation for the apparently inexplicable failure of people to comprehend, let alone practice, biblical ethical principles. Only the work of the Spirit in “renewing the mind [nous]” (Rom. 12:2) can overcome this deep-seated blindness and perversity...The Greek for “mind” is νοῦς. This word refers to more than intellectual capacity; it is the organ of moral reasoning and willing (cf. Rom. 7:23, 25; 11:34; 12:2; 14:5; 1 Cor. 1:10; 2:16; 14:14, 15, 19; Eph. 4:17, 23; Phil. 4:7; Col. 2:18; 2 Thess. 2:2; 1 Tim. 6:5; 2 Tim. 3:8; Tit. 1:15). The word occurs outside of Paul in the NT only in Luke 24:45 and Rev. 13:18; 17:9. See J. Behm, TDNT IV, 958–59.” NICNT

<sup>57</sup> “Paul includes a long list of immoral activities in “things that are not proper” in vv. 29–31. Such a listing of sins is called a “vice list,” a literary form widespread in secular moral writings as well as in the NT. As is typical of such lists, this one exhibits no rigid logical arrangement, since rhetorical concerns play a role in the ordering of the list. Nor is it possible to give each term in the list a meaning distinct from every other term—some are virtually synonymous, and a considerable degree of overlap in meaning occurs. Nevertheless, we can note some structural as well as logical order.” NICNT

Wickedness = Poneria – “from ponerous which means a malicious person in that not only is he evil but he expresses that malice and affects others. Therefore, it is malevolence.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

- evil<sup>58</sup> - just means doing things contrary to what is good and Godly.
- covetousness, - we are selfish and want to consume everything around us for our own benefit regardless of the cost to others.
- malice. – it means having mean intent toward others.
- They are full of envy, - we want what others have and would rather them not have it so we could have it. It's a longing for their stuff but also an added desire for them to not have it.
- murder, - this is intentional killing for personal benefit.
- strife, - this is fighting and disagreeing with angry intent and harming others in the process.
- deceit, - this is deceiving others and lying for our benefit. It's taking advantage of others.
- maliciousness<sup>59</sup> – it means thinking bad of others and doing bad to others.
- They are gossips,<sup>60</sup> - this is whispering about someone else to shape a person's perspective on another negatively.
- slanderers,<sup>61</sup> - this is intentionally harming someone's reputation by something we said.
- haters of God,<sup>62</sup> - those who are ardently opposed to godly things and God Himself.
- insolent,<sup>63</sup> - this is pride and lifting oneself beyond our proper position.
- haughty<sup>64</sup> - this is arrogant, having a 'better than others' view of self.
- boastful<sup>65</sup> - this is an outwardly revealing (talking) about how great oneself is. Telling others they are great.
- inventors of evil, - these are people who simply are so wicked that they will always want to do something the wicked way. If there's no normal way to do that they will make one up. It's creatively evil.
- disobedient to parents, - this is obvious.
- foolish, - this means clueless and stupid when making moral decisions.

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<sup>58</sup> Evil = Kakia – “wickedness, as an evil habit of the mind. Derived from kakoetheia, evil manners or moral (Rom 1:29), ill-nature, depravity.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>59</sup> Malice = kakoetheia – “from kakos, bad, evil and ethos, custom. Occurs only in Rom 1:29 translated ‘malice.’ It actually means ill nature, taking everything with an evil connotation and giving a malicious interpretation of the actions of others. That nature which is evil ad makes one suspect evil in others.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>60</sup> “The final part of the vice list begins with two terms that denote slander. The first is the more specific, suggesting the “whispering” of the person who spreads “confidential” rumors about others.” NICNT

<sup>61</sup> “The word translated “maligners” could more clumsily be paraphrased “one who speaks against.” NICNT

Slanderers = katalalos – “an open slanderer from the verb katalaleo, from kata, against, and laleo, to speak. To speak evil of, slander with whatever words come to one's mouth without giving thought to them.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>62</sup> “The next word is the most difficult in the list to define. It is composed of words that mean “hate” and “God,” but it is not clear whether God is the hater or the one hated. In classical Greek it is invariably passive, “hated by the gods,” and some give it this meaning here. But it is more likely that the word has an active sense, “haters of God.” NICNT

<sup>63</sup> “The sin of human self-exaltation before both God and other people is conveyed in the next three words, “proud,” “arrogant,” and “overbearing.” Trench distinguishes them, arguing that the first focuses on activities, the second on thoughts, and the third on words. Without making these distinctions absolute, they capture accurately enough the nuances of the words.” NICNT

Insolent = hubristes – “insolent wrongdoer to others for the pleasure which the affliction of the wrong imparts.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>64</sup> Arrogant = Huperephanos – “proud, from huper, over, and phainomai, appear. One who shows himself above his fellow men in honor preferring himself.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>65</sup> Boastful = Alazon – “boaster in words. Vaunting in those things one does not possess. Contrasted with perperos and the verb perpereuomai, boasting about things one has with contempt for others.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

- faithless, - faithless means you can't count on them, they don't follow through on their word and commitments.
- heartless<sup>66</sup> - this means without 'family love'. It means you don't even care about your own people around you that you are connected to, like family.
- ruthless – this means you can do evil and not even feel bad about it. You are particularly nasty and mean or just cold-hearted.
- Though they know God's righteous decree<sup>67</sup> that those who practice<sup>68</sup> such things deserve to die,<sup>69</sup> - These people on this list know that these things are wrong and continue to do them anyway. That is the accountability issue. It's not a mistake. It's intentional.
- they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them<sup>70</sup> - to make matters worse, they are not just doing wrong things intentionally but they feel fine about it and encourage it in others.

## Conclusion

- Breakthrough in Romans – over and over in the book of Romans we are going to be challenged with a few things:
  1. Who is running our life?
  2. How much is sin determining our decisions?
  3. Do we understand God rightly?
  4. Do we understand who Jesus is and what He has done?
  5. To what degree has the Holy Spirit been given freedom to transform us?
  6. Do we understand that gospel and are we living as if it's true?

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<sup>66</sup> Heartless/Unloving = Astorgos – “from the pri. A, without, and the noun storge, family love, without family love.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>67</sup> Righteous decree = Dikaloma – “the product or result of being justified by God. The rights or claims which one has before god when he becomes His child by faith through Christ.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>68</sup> Practice = Prasso – “to make, perform in general; do good; but more commonly, do evil. Whenever the words prasso and poieo assume an ethical tinge, the inclination makes itself felt to use poieo in a good sense and prasso in an evil sense, the latter tendency appearing in a more marked way in the uses of praxis.” (NASB Study Bible: Lexical Aids to the New Testament)

<sup>69</sup> “Toward this end, Paul notes that those who engage in the activities he has listed know that what they are doing is wrong. They act “knowing the righteous decree of God, that those who do such things are worthy of death.” “Righteous decree” translates a word that Paul uses several other times in Romans, the closest parallel being 8:4, where Paul speaks of the “righteous decree of the law” that believers fulfill by the Spirit. The lack of reference here to “the law” is significant: Paul speaks of what all people, whether blessed with special revelation or not, can know of God's just judgment. “Death” denotes here a divinely imposed punishment and reminds us, as does the earlier part of this passage, of Gen. 3. As Michel rightly emphasizes, the present tenses in this verse show that Paul is speaking not only of what has been true in the past or of what will be true in the future. People generally, Paul claims, have some degree of awareness that the moral outrages they commit are wrong and hence deserve to be punished by God.” NICNT

<sup>70</sup> “The last part of the verse poses a certain difficulty. For by characterizing people as those “who not only do these things themselves, but commend those who do them,” Paul appears to suggest that “commending” evil is worse than doing it. Some have attempted to avoid the difficulty by rearranging the text or translating it differently, but these solutions are not convincing.<sup>170</sup> After all, is the traditional interpretation so large a problem? Granted that commending evil is not, in the ultimate sense, worse than doing it, it is also true that in a certain respect the person who commits a sin under the influence of strong temptation is less reprehensible than the one who dispassionately agrees with and encourages a sin for which he or she feels no strong attraction him- or herself. As Murray says, “we are not only bent on damning ourselves but we congratulate others in the doing of those things that we know have their issue in damnation.” Although it does not feature the same ascensive emphasis, T. Asher 6:2 is both verbally and conceptually close to Paul's statement: “The two-faced are doubly punished because they both practice evil and approve of others who practice it; they imitate the spirits of error and join in the struggle against mankind.” NICNT

- Arguments for the existence of God.<sup>71</sup>
  - The Thomist Argument (Saint Thomas Aquinas – 1225-1274) – We have two choices for why we are here: 1.) An infinite regress of human beings (everyone just kept having kids infinitely back in time), or 2.) Finite beings must owe their existence to a necessary being (one who could have started the chain by not needing to be created since it's not "finite"). Since we know man hasn't always existed, then we are left with option number 2, a necessary being, God, who started the chain.
  - The Leibnizian Argument (philosopher Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz – 1646-1716) – The basis is the question, 'Why does anything exist at all?' The principle of sufficient reason states that for anything that exists, there must be some reason. To gain reason/value/meaning, a "starter" or God is necessary.
  - Kalam Argument (kalam = Arabic philosophy or theology). This theory is a series of questions and options. 1.) Either the universe had a beginning or it didn't. 2.) The beginning was either caused or not. 3.) The cause was either personal or it wasn't. The answers are as follows.
    - To the statement that the universe had a beginning 3 "postulates" are given: A.) The universe had a beginning because a beginningless temporal series of events cannot exist. B.) The Big Bang Cosmology – in the 1920's Edwin Hubble discovered a phenomenon as the red shift. It indicates that the universe is expanding. Galaxies are moving away from one another much like dots on the surface of an inflating balloon. As scientist Robert Jastrow put it, 'What is the ultimate solution to the origin of the Universe? The answers provided by the astronomers are disconcerting and remarkable. Most remarkable of all is the fact that in science, as in the Bible, the world begins with an act of creation.' C.) The Second Law of Thermodynamics – The entropy of the universe is increasing. The universe is moving irreversibly toward a state of maximum disorder and minimum energy. The universe is wearing down irreversibly. The universe could not have existed forever, otherwise it would have reached its equilibrium end state an infinite time ago.
    - The statement that the beginning of the universe was caused has one primary supporting theory: A.) The Law of Cause and Effect – Events have a definite beginning and end, and do not happen without something causing them. By contrast, God does not need a cause, since he is neither an event nor a contingent being.
    - The statement that the beginning cause was personal has one primary supporting theory: A.) The only way for the universe to arise from a timeless, changeless, spaceless state of affairs is the result of the free act of a person or agent. The event is realized when the agent freely acts. The agent then freely chose to bring it about, thus it being 'personal.'
  - The Design/Teleological Argument – This argument is made up of many smaller arguments.
    - Design as Order – The universe as a whole, confronts us in an orderly, arranged universe. Ex: Objects behave in accordance with the laws of nature.
    - Design as Purpose – The orderly arrangement suggests that the parts work together for some purpose or plan. A plan of purpose suggests a designer.
    - Design as Simplicity – In many examples and ways the world exhibits unity and simplicity. Ex: gravity explains a lot. That unity and simplicity suggest a designer who made it simple, efficient and unified. It is a sign of intelligence to be able to communicate something in simple terms.
    - Design as Complexity – The more we discover about the universe the more we see it is complex and intricate. This suggests intelligence in design that it all works together.
    - Design as Beauty – Beautiful theories or systems of thought (as well as beauty in nature) get their beauty from the superior intellect (mind) which formed them.
    - Design as Sense and Cognition – Humans have the ability to perceive and think about the world accurately. This suggests a designer by an intelligent being. It is not clear that the ability to know truth from falsity is necessary to survive (not evolution). The mind grasps abstract truths which do not seem to have anything to do with survival.
    - Design as Information – The information in genetic code existed prior to and outside of the parts of that code (someone thought it up before it was organized). That information was imposed on those parts by a Mind.
  - The Argument From Mind/Anthropological Argument – It states that man as a rational agent implies God is the Ground or Cause of his rationality.
    - This argument is basically answering questions such as: How could consciousness have evolved from matter? Can matter think? If mind emerged from matter without the direction of a superior intelligence, why should we trust the deliverances of the mind as being rational or true? If thinking involves having abstract entities instanced in one's mind, then it seems to be incredibly unlikely that a property which emerged from matter in a struggle for survival would be the sort of thing that could have thought in it in the first place.

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<sup>71</sup> Moreland, J. P. *Scaling the Secular City: A Defense of Christianity*. (Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI, 1987.)