

Tommy Meador / General Adult

Romans / Romans 1:18–32

Introduction

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- Nothing more deadly than sin and rebellion against God - but what's deadly can look so nourishing. Every day, billions of people give their lives to what is deadly thinking that it will nourish their souls.
- You've done it to - you've given your heart to the pursuit of wealth, or the juicy, slanderous conversation, or the temporary sexual gratification - all promised nourishment and life, but they're actually taking life.
- Why do we turn to things that take life to find nourishment/satisfaction for our souls? Unbelief. People refuse to believe that Jesus is the only One who truly nourish the soul, so constantly turn to things that take life for nourishment that will never be given.
- We are surrounded by unbelief. Paul was surrounded by unbelief.
- The mission of God drove Paul to write to the church at Rome, to encourage them in their understanding of the Gospel, and to gain their support for a missionary journey to Spain.
- Paul wanted the Roman believers to know that they lived in a world of unbelief - and they, as well, were at one time had unbelieving hearts.

- In a congregation made up of Jewish believers and Gentile believers, Paul wanted this church to know that they all shared the same problem apart from the work of Christ: sinful, unbelieving hearts.
- This morning, three characteristics of an unbelieving heart to help us understand the condition of our world as we strive to make Jesus known.

An unbelieving heart suppresses the truth.

- The righteousness of God is revealed - a gift to all those who believe. (vs. 17) At the same time, the wrath of God is revealed (vs. 18) against all godlessness of people who instead of believing, suppress the truth.
- Wrath - not uncontrolled angry outburst, but a settled, controlled righteous anger aimed at all wickedness. You don't have to look far to know we live in a wicked world. Certainly, our perfect, holy God cannot be unmoved by the wickedness of the world.
- Who are the wicked? [Rom. 3:11-12, 23](#) - All who have rejected the gift of God's righteousness in Christ.
- The unrighteous *suppress* the truth. NOT don't know the truth but actively hold it down.
- Everyone who does not belong to God suppresses the truth. The question is how do people who do not know God suppress the truth? Paul's argument: Everyone knows God. God has made Himself known to every person on the planet through His creation. (Scholars call this general revelation.) [Psalm 119:1-4](#)
- Go outside -look around - you can come to the conclusion that there must be a God. Creation didn't happen by chance. (Evolution teaches chance...) Creation screams that there must be a majestic, powerful Creator. You see the vastness of the universe, and you see your finiteness - that you are creature, not creator.

- People are without excuse - every person on the planet can come to the conclusion that there is an intelligent Designer who we should stand in awe of and seek to know. BUT every person doesn't seek Him out - every person suppresses the truth about God.
- Instead of glorifying God, humanity is ungrateful.
- Understand Paul's argument. It's NOT that humanity CAN'T know God. God has revealed Himself in His creation. It's that humanity doesn't WANT to know God. ([Isaiah 64:7](#); [Romans 3:11](#) - no one seeks God.)
- THIS is what the sinful nature has done to humanity - caused us to suppress the truth.
- But why would humanity suppress the truth instead of seek after God?
 - **The Pull of Darkness** - What's dark? Anything that's rebellious against God's design - and the pull to rebel is strong... The illicit relationship, the juicy gossip, the hatred of that person who's wronged you, the lies that are easy to tell, the cheating to get ahead... Evil is more enticing than righteousness because evil promises immediate pleasure. The promise of darkness: play now, pay later.
 - **The Pride of Autonomy** - I don't need God. I want to be independent. I don't want to answer to Him. If there is a God, I'm accountable, and I don't want to be.
 - **The Power of Substitutes** - A world full of "instead of God I'll have..." Wealth and gain seem better than giving our lives away. Success seems better than sacrifice. Sexual pleasure seems better than sexual integrity.
- No wonder we suppress the truth. Truth is simply not as enticing as the lure of the enemy.

An unbelieving heart perverts the truth.

- What happens when people suppress the truth? They create their own truth - they create their own truth about what is good, what is glorious, and what is worth pursuing. In sum, they pervert the truth.
- vs. 22-23 - In an ancient world - instead of seeking the true God, they created their own gods. Instead of worshipping the Creator of all, they worshiped what they created. Idols were all over the Roman empire - Zeus, Aphrodite, etc. These believers in Rome saw it all around them - idolatry everywhere they turned. And, in the eyes of a Roman world, it seemed wise - "Look at our gods - if we bring them our worship, they give us what we want." They created their own truth. They created their own gods to serve them.
- It's been this way for all of history. Instead of seeking truth, we create our own truth. We define for ourselves what is right, good, what gives us satisfaction, what give us hope. Instead of seeking the One who is truth, we exchange the truth that has been revealed for a lie. We're not as wise as we think we are. If we exchange the glory of God for a lie, we're absolutely foolish.
- You hear the perversion of truth in the way people talk:
 - I want to live out my truth.
 - I won't apologize for living my truth.
 - I'm learning to choose me.
 - I owe it to myself.
 - If you loved me, you'd affirm my truth.
- There's not a your truth or a my truth - there's one truth, and truth has a name: Jesus. ([John 14:6](#)) He is the glorious One who we were created to worship.

- Modern day idolatry is the worship of my truth. The lie of sinful humanity, “I get to decide what brings me hope, joy, peace, and satisfaction, and that’s what I will live for.”
- What makes something an idol?
 - **It has an object:** eg., self, success, image, control, comfort.
 - **It makes a promise:** “If I have this, I will be...”
 - **It makes a threat:** “If I don’t have it, life isn’t worth living...”
 - **It requires a sacrifice:** “I’m willing to give up truth, people, holiness, etc. to have it.”
- This is an unbelieving heart - a constant perversion of the truth - where we attempt to define truth instead of embracing revealed truth - that there is a God who is worth seeking and worshipping.

An unbelieving heart destroys life.

- vs. 24-32 - Tragic verses. “God delivered them over...”
- The wrath of God IS revealed - it’s present and future. There’s judgment now and final judgment to come. The present judgement is that God allows sinful humanity to have what they want: present desires, temporary pleasures, the pursuit of own truth. When we get what we want rather than what God wants for us its always disastrous.
- God gave over to sexual impurity... vs. 26 - God delivered them over to disgraceful passions. vs. 26-28 - Paul focuses on sexual sin in general in vs. 24 and homosexual sin in specific in vs. 26-28. Why? For Paul, a clear example of what’s against God’s design, and in a Roman culture, just like an American culture, sexual sin and homosexuality were rampant.
- In a modern world that has by and large embraced homosexuality as natural and normal, many want to explain these verses away. “Paul is

only talking about promiscuous homosexuality, not long-term, committed, monogamous homosexuality.”

- Paul is NOT differentiating between a same-sex couple who are in a committed homosexual relationship and people who are living promiscuously. Instead, Paul is showing us what happens when humanity is given over to whatever it wants - we step far away from God’s design.
- It’s an unavoidable fact that the Bible says that homosexuality is a sin. It’s also an unavoidable fact that the Bible says that all sex outside of marriage is a sin. Paul highlights homosexuality to prove a point: when we define our own truth it leads down a path that is the absolute opposite of God’s good design.
- God’s design = Garden of Eden - One man/one woman for life. Today, God’s design rejected. Homosexuality or any type of sexual expression you chose is fine by the world’s standard. After all, the world tells you, “My body, my choice...”
- You might not agree with what Paul writes. It might offend you that Paul calls homosexuality disgraceful and unnatural, but God has a better design. A design that when lived out according to His will is actually a beautiful picture of the love of Christ for His people.
- However, this is what happens when culture exchanges truth for a lie... The world does what is not right and it leads to all kinds of unrighteousness... Not just homosexuality, but greed, envy, murder, quarrels, gossips, arrogant, disobedient to parents, etc. (vs. 29-31).
- vs. 32 - People have an innate awareness of evil. We innately know that we deserve punishment for a life that is opposed to what’s right. Yet, those who reject God don’t care about the consequences. They celebrate lifestyles that they know are opposed to God.

- Choosing to reject God and living for your own truth destroys. Some of us are living in the destructive path of loved ones who have chosen their own truth rather than submitting to God's truth.
- *You see the destruction in your family.*
- *Some of us feel the destruction in our own lives.* Some in this room have rejected God and chosen a path of destruction. You thought it was a path that would bring you joy, but it's brought you heartache, emptiness, and misery. Your defined truth didn't deliver. You carry a weight of shame. You want a different life - you can have a different life if you'll embrace the truth.
- *You see the destruction in society.* This cultural moment where everyone does what is right in their own eyes is heartbreaking to watch.
- *Ultimately, eternal destruction is coming.* You feel the destruction, the judgment now - but an even more terrifying judgment awaits all that stay in their unbelief.
- Today, if you have lived a life suppressing the truth, God can work a miracle in your heart. We talked about general revelation - God makes Himself known in creation. But, there's also revelation. God has revealed Himself to us in His Son, Jesus - our redeemer. Who came to show us the glory of the Father by living a perfect life, dying the death that we deserve, taking the judgment of God upon Himself, and rising from the dead to forgive us of our sins. Today, repent of your sins and believe in Jesus as Lord. I want [1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#) to be true of you.
- This is the world YOU live in - a world of unbelief. How do you respond?
- **Don't affirm what destroys.** You have people you love who want you to affirm their rejection of God and sinful choices. Don't do it. Don't be ashamed of the Gospel. Be loving enough to have the tough conversations.

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Romans 1:18-32: The Characteristics of an Unbelieving Heart

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