
MONDAY: ROMANS 1:18-32—THE GREAT EXCHANGE

This is the first main movement in Paul's argument in Romans 1. The main point? God's wrath is being revealed from heaven because people who should honor God have not done so. They have instead turned to humanly created images of worship rather than the invisible, immortal God.

- What is the main reason for God's wrath according to Romans 1?
- In Romans 1:22-32, Paul describes humanity's rebellion in three movements. Read through this section very carefully. Underline or highlight repetition in Paul's language or phrasing. Notice the pattern: people did not honor or glorify God; God "handed them over." What stands out about each movement? How are the three movements related? Does there seem to be any priority or distinction?

TUESDAY: ROMANS 1:22-32—IDOLATRY AND BODILY DESIRE

Paul describes the exchange of God for idols and what follows from this.

- In the first "therefore God handed them over" (verse 24) Paul singles out the way that people dishonored their bodies. Read verses 22-24 closely. What do you think is the relation between idolatry and "dishonoring" one's physical body? What comes first in Paul's reasoning?
- Read verses 25-27. Describe the logic in Paul's thought. What is the real sin here?
- Describe what Paul is identifying in verses 26-27. What does Paul say? What does he not say? What is the connection between "unnatural" relations and idolatry or not glorifying God?

WEDNESDAY: ROMANS 1:24-32—EVERYTHING UNDER THE SUN

Paul continues to itemize the various results of dishonoring God.

- It's true that today we understand "homosexuality" differently than those 2,000 years ago. Science plays a role in our understanding; we categorize people's "sexuality," something foreign to the ancient world. What difference does all this make? Paul writes of things that are "against nature." What "nature" of human relations does Paul have in mind? Is Paul speaking about an *individual's* nature or of how God 'set up' humanity?
- Are Paul's statements about "unnatural" relations commands? What difference does this make? How do you read and apply verses 26-27 in light of what you have read so far?
- In verses 29-31, Paul gives an extensive list of vices that result from not acknowledging God. What stands out about this list? How does it relate to the verses about "unnatural" relations?

THURSDAY: MATTHEW 7:1-5—MUTUAL LOG-CLEARING

This is an easily identified saying. Many people today use the short-hand version: “Don’t judge me!” But there is certainly more than just this simple statement! For, in Matthew Jesus goes on to explain...

- Who is Jesus talking about here? Disciples judging disciples? Or disciples judging non-disciples? What difference does it make?
- What might be the “speck” and “log”?
- Read verse 5 carefully. What does this verse assume about everyone? What sort of mutual relationship between disciples does Jesus presume here in place of flat-footed judging? How might you apply this to the issue of homosexuality? Divorce? Or other significant behaviors regarded as sinful or inappropriate?

FRIDAY: JOHN 8:3-11—NO CONDEMNATION AND NEW LIFE

This is a very well-known and well-worn story about the adulterous woman who is brought to Jesus for stoning. Jesus refuses to do so. Imagine if you are this woman. You have been *caught in the act* of this transgression of God’s command. Absolutely no way out, and every reason to receive the proper consequences. And he throws no stone. He throws no stone!

- The Pharisees have Deuteronomy 22:22-24 as their ammunition. Why does Jesus contradict the Old Testament law given by God? Why does it work?
- Why doesn’t Jesus condemn the woman? Why does what he tells her have any force?
- Talk about this story from the perspective of the Pharisees. Then discuss it from the perspective of the woman. Discuss how you identify with each. There’s no way around it—we all identify with both parties. Now talk about how Jesus’ statement and action changes both the ‘Pharisee’ and ‘adulterer’ in all of us.
- Take some time and identify scenarios analogous to this story today. How does this story in John 8 speak to these today? Does the issue of homosexuality apply? How does this story read with this issue in mind?

SATURDAY: I CORINTHIANS 6:9-11—A NEW, DIFFERENT COMMUNITY

Someone in Corinth had taken another believer to court over some matter unknown to us. Paul rebukes them firmly. Such actions compromise the identity of their community as God’s people on earth. It shows factionalism, the inability to look past one’s own concerns, and the inability to live in the love of Christ. Regardless of who might win the suit or disagreement, such fighting shows defeat already, says Paul. He asks a provoking question: “Why not be wronged? Why not rather be defrauded?”

- Into this context Paul writes the vice list in verses 9-11. It has two vices which bear on the modern issue of ‘homosexuality.’ Paul uses specific terms: *malakoi*, the first mentioned, is not easily translated (“male prostitutes” (NIV) is the least helpful). It denotes one who is ‘effeminate’ or who blurs the lines between male and female in some way. The second term, *arsenokoitai* (“homosexual offenders” (NIV) denotes a male who lies with or, literally, “beds” a male. Paul does not appeal to “natural/unnatural” relations as in Romans. Is he talking about the same thing?
- Paul makes no distinctions in this list. It seems that we do. What do you make of that?
- Read verse 11. What’s Paul’s point? How does this relate to the list of vices?