**The Book of Romans**

**Part One: God’s righteousness is revealed in His just wrath against mankind’s sin. (1:18–3:20)**

**Why can’t we just stop sinning?**

**Romans 1:24-32**

The conversation about humanity often grows out of two assumptions, namely that man is basically good (it’s culture that leads us astray) and that we have free will. Often the two collide, as in the case of a mass murderer who grew up in a severely dysfunctional home. Here we can be quite inconsistent in our responses, for on the one hand, we can’t seem to let go of the “innocence” we claim in newborns or the excuses we make for even the most heinous of crimes.

The Bible explains things quite differently, as you might imagine, reminding us that we are born sinners and that our will is enslaved to sin. What is the reasoning?

Paul explains that our addiction to evil is a result of our unwillingness to love and worship God by submitting to His will. He links our deepening spiral into sin (as individuals and cultures) to idolatry, our persistence in worshiping anything but the God who made us. All sins, not just the “perverted” ones, are rooted in idolatry. Here’s why.

**When we fully and finally refuse to worship God. . .**

 ***He leaves us captive to our heart’s desires. vv. 24, 25***

Instead of bringing immediate punishment, God turns us over to our “freedom” to sin. The serpent told Eve that she and Adam would be as gods, as soon as they exercised their Independence. What he didn’t say was that turning from God leaves one on his own to harvest the resulting physical, emotional, relational, and spiritual carnage. No creature is safe outside His loving plan and care; all are vulnerable. God created all laws, including the law of sowing and reaping.

***He abandons us to perverse desires. vv. 26, 27***

Sin is one thing, perverse sin another. Gluttony is sin, but the glutton still craves only food. Likewise, covetousness is sin, but the thing desired is not necessarily wrong in itself. The sin is in its being someone else’s. But Paul is saying that it’s possible to be given over to another level in which desires are wrong in themselves because they are not only against God but Creation order itself. These unnatural, or more properly, anti-natural lusts, are easily identified. Whether legal or not, acceptable in a culture or not, God calls these things “degrading passions” and “indecent acts.”

 ***He allows unrighteousness to rule us. vv. 28-32***

In the previous section (vv. 26, 27), the issue is falling deeper into sin. In this section, it is about the breadth of our sin, that is, how it has spread into every aspect and venue of our lives. The “depraved mind” to which God can abandon us is the source of “all (kinds of) unrighteousness,” specifically twenty different kinds: sins of the heart, the mind, the body, sins of relationships, attitudes, and mouth. Paul ends by showing how unrighteousness is fully grown when we not only know that something is wrong, we celebrate its wrongness with delight. We can see this in our day, in many practices that have been counted as sins in every generation are now celebrated as “courageous choices.”

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**Applying God’s Truth to Life**

**We side with God on the definition of “sin.”**

Man’s laws do not change God’s law, and therefore what is legal may not be moral. Cannibalism, deception, and murder are acceptable in certain circumstances in some cultures. If not vigilant, we come to accept as normal what God condemns. There is forgiveness and salvation from ANY sin if we are willing to call it a sin. 1 Corinthians 6:9-11

**We make a “Declaration of Dependence.”**

Since all sin begins with a departure from God, it stands to reason that the way to prevent or escape sin is to turn to Him moment by moment. We are His by creation and by redemption, and we were made and redeemed to have fellowship with Him. 1 John 1:5–2:6