

SERMON NOTES
Romans 1-3
"Why We Need the Gospel"

Intro:

- *Parts of what I say in this message may one day be illegal*
- *An adjunct professor at the University of Illinois may get fired for teaching similar concepts to what I will be sharing later in this message*
- *What got this Catholic professor in trouble with the head of the religion department?*
- *He sent an email to students in his class on Catholicism that Natural Moral Law teaches that sexual acts are only appropriate for people who are complementary, not the same, and that according to Natural Law and Catholic teaching, homosexual sex is immoral and unnatural*
- *For that, he was accused of hate speech, and is in danger of losing his job*

- *Because I will be dealing with a controversial text and a sensitive topic today, let me state at the beginning some caveats:*
 - (1) *Homosexuality is not the root problem in our culture's moral decline– and certainly gay and lesbian individuals are not the root problem – the greater problem is social approval of homosexuality and same-sex marriage– but even that is merely symptomatic of the root problem – namely, our society's rejection of God as Creator – exchanging the truth of God for a lie – and our society's rebellion against God's Moral Authority*
 - (2) *Christians must express our disapproval of homosexual practice in the context of our own sexual fallenness and desperate need of God's saving grace in Christ. We need to focus more on the logs in our own eyes rather than the specks in others'.*
 - (3) *Jesus loves homosexual sinners and heterosexual sinners equally and without distinction – and the Gospel offers all sinners forgiveness and hope for newness of life*
 - (4) *Demeaning jokes, derogatory slang terms, and other expressions of contempt toward gays or lesbians are unworthy of Christ-followers*
 - (5) *Gays and lesbians are welcome to worship God at Cornerstone*

- *It would be hard to think of a biblical text more counter-cultural and controversial than Romans 1:18-32*
- *In this passage Paul deals with two subjects that are absolutely abhorrent to modern sensibilities: namely, the wrath of God and the belief that homosexuality is unnatural and immoral*

- Thus this text offers a good test as to whether we are submitted to the authority of God's Word or whether the world has squeezed us into its mold

I. THE WRATH OF GOD

- *Many people in our culture view God as a purely benign Being*
- They believe in a God who is loving, forgiving and non-judgmental – a God who accepts us just as we are – a God who never gets angry – *or at least He never gets angry at good people like us – or if He ever does, His anger soon passes and everything is fine again*
- A God who never gets angry at sin – *Would that kind of God be worthy of worship?*
- 10-year-old Sandy began coming to school with peculiar marks on her hands and arms. On another day she arrived with a burn mark covering a good part of her hand. It had not been treated and had become infected.
- *In asking Sandy about her injuries, the teacher learned that Sandy was being abused by her father.*
- After several drinks, he would "help her" with her homework, become angered by her slowness, and prod her with his lit cigarette.
- *The latest burn was a result of Sandy's hand being pressed on an iron when her father had taken over her mother's efforts to teach Sandy how to "iron properly."*
- **Some of us might get angry at that, but God never gets angry**

* A 14-year-old girl from rural Northern Thailand, had just finished her 8th grade studies and hoped to spend her summer break earning some extra money. Her family needed the funds badly: Her father had died and her mother was stricken with AIDS.

When a local man approached her offering a well-paying job that would last four months, she accepted. He instead took her through a border checkpoint into Malaysia, where he sold her to a local brothel owner.

She was told that she would have to service five to 10 customers a night and that if she failed to meet her quota or refused customers, she would be beaten and abused.

- ***Some of us might get angry at that – but the God of Tolerance never gets angry – and He never brings anyone to justice in any kind of final judgment – for He is only loving and forgiving and never judgmental***

- **The God of the Bible is a holy and just and righteous God who opposes and judges all that is evil**
- *The wrath of God is God's deeply personal abhorrence of evil*
- It does not mean that God loses His temper or flies into a rage or is ever malicious, spiteful or vindictive – His anger is not like ours
- *It means that God is not indifferent toward evil*
- **The wrath of God is His holy hostility to evil – His refusal to condone it or tolerate it – His just judgment upon sin and evil**

Romans 1:18 (NIV) ¹⁸The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

- *Godlessness is the failure to acknowledge God, worship God, thank God, love God with all our being and obey Him with joy*
- *Wickedness refers to the wrongs we do to other people – the failure to love our neighbors as ourselves – the many ways our self-centeredness harms others*
- *Because we are all sinners, we have a high tolerance for sin – especially our own*
- *We rarely see clearly or understand fully the harm that we cause with our sins – (though we are usually much more sensitive and aware of the harm others cause when they sin against us)*
- *Maybe we can understand God being angry with priests who molest children or human traffickers or corrupt politicians or greedy CEOs*
- *But it's hard for most of us to imagine that good people like us have ever done anything worthy of the wrath of God*
- **Because God is holy, He has zero tolerance for sin and for us harming others**
- **Because God is righteous and just and all-knowing and all-powerful – He will judge all of us according to our deeds and He will punish all wrong-doing**

Romans 1:18 ¹⁸But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who push the truth away from themselves.

II. THE SUPPRESSION OF TRUTH

- *It is not just that all human beings do wrong – it is that we do wrong while knowing better – we knowingly and defiantly break God's Law*

- **And it's not just that we do wrong while knowing better – *it is that we are determined to live as though there is no Sovereign Ruler and Righteous Judge in heaven to whom we are accountable* – and therefore we deliberately stifle the truth that God is God and we are not**
- ***We suppress the truth – we push the truth away – we stubbornly and vigorously resist the truth – so that we can continue living as we please***
- **Annie's Mailbox: *Whenever my husband is confronted with an opinion he does not agree with, he sticks his fingers in his ears***
- ***How very mature***
- **But that is basically humanity's posture toward God**
- ***Whenever the Word of God says something that we do not want to hear – we stick our fingers in our ears – we block out the truth // we avoid the truth // we run from the truth // we push the truth away from us***
- **And what is the primary and most important truth that humanity suppresses?**
- ***The truth that God is God and we are not***
- **This truth is not hidden or hard to discover**

Romans 1:19-20 ¹⁹because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. ²⁰For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

- ***God reveals Himself throughout the created universe – His deity, infinity, power, skill, goodness, wisdom and personality are displayed in the complexities of every single cell as well as in the finely-tuned and well-ordered galaxies of the universe***
- **But many scientists and others – instead of worshiping our awesome Creator – have suppressed the truth about our Creator God**
- ***They are without excuse***
- **Since the time of Copernicus, we have known that the earth was not the center of the universe around which the sun and stars and planets revolved**
- ***But as individuals, it is human nature to live as though we were the center of the universe and not God – to live as though we get to make up our own rules and determine for ourselves what is right and wrong***
- ***When confronted with the truth about God and His Design and Purposes for sex and marriage– people today simply stick their fingers in their ears –***

push the truth away – *and go about their business of doing whatever seems right in their own eyes*

- When I was visiting with my son-in-law Peter's professor at Cambridge, he made a comment that stuck with me
- *He said the gay rights movement is not first and foremost about sex or marriage or equal rights*
- The fact is, there aren't enough gays and lesbians to change cultural norms and values as quickly and aggressively as they have been changed in the past 10-20 years
- *Most of the people promoting the full acceptance of homosexuality and same-sex marriage are heterosexual – many of them in traditional families*
- So why are so many of our heterosexual culture-shapers promoting full acceptance and approval of homosexuality and the gay lifestyle?
- *Professor: Gay liberation is the ultimate rejection of the truth that God is God and we are not – it is mankind's ultimate declaration that man, and not God, will define what it means to be human and male or female – man, not God, will define sexual identity and roles and practices and morality and love and marriage and family – and that kind of independence from the Creator's authority is a compelling cause for heterosexuals as well as homosexuals*

III. THREE FOOLISH & DEADLY EXCHANGES

- Notice the three exchanges outlined in these verses:

Romans 1:22 - 27 (NIV) ²²Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools ²³and **exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images** made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. ²⁵They **exchanged the truth of God for a lie**, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. ²⁶Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women **exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones**. ²⁷In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

(1) The glory of God for our own images of God

- John Piper: *“The solar system of our soul and society was made to orbit around the glory of God as its all-controlling sun.*

- ***“And the entire human race has exchanged the glory of God for weightless, substitute satellites that have no gravity and can hold nothing in its proper orbit... When you exchange the sun for a man-made satellite, all the planets leave their orbit and head for oblivion... Therefore all the world is disordered and decaying and moving toward destruction.”***
- ***We don't offer sacrifices to images of golden calves or elephants or monkeys – yet –***
- ***But we have exchanged the Glory of the Immortal God for worthless idols such as materialism and naturalistic science and sexual pleasure and sports and moral relativism and religious pluralism***
- ***Certainly, our society has a whole has made the second exchange:***

(2) The truth of God for a lie

- ***If we did not come from the loving hand of our Creator, then where did we come from? Who or what is responsible for our existence, if not God?***

Philip Johnson: *Did God create Man, or did Man create God? According to the scientific naturalist version of cosmic history, nature is a permanently closed system of material effects that can never be influenced by something from outside - like God, for example.*

God, in this metaphysical system, is inherently a product of human imagination, and therefore a relic from prescientific times, when humans knew no better than to attribute to a supernatural being their own existence and that of everything else they encountered. Science has allegedly changed all that.

In the words of one of the most influential of modern Darwinists, the Harvard paleontologist George Gaylord Simpson, the "meaning of evolution" is *"Man is the result of a purposeless and natural process that did not have him in mind."*

If we are accidental products of a purposeless cosmos, then there are no objective moral values which we are obligated to respect. As individuals or as societies, we create values out of our imagination, just as we created God, and we can recreate those values as we choose.

That is why marriage, for example, can be culturally redefined at any time.

Marriage is not inherently a lifetime union between a husband and a wife, looking to the procreation of children. It was defined that way in a pre-modern culture, but our post-modernist culture can redefine it to include arrangements intended to be only temporary,

or same-sex unions, or even arrangements involving multiple partners. *Why not, now that we know the God who supposedly created marriage was in fact created out of the imagination of our ancestors?"*

- **Some things never change – as was the case 2000 years ago – so it is now:**
- **They exchanged the truth of God for a lie**
- **And that leads to the third exchange:**

(3) Natural sexual relations for unnatural relations

Romans 1:26 - 27 (NIV) ²⁶Because of this (*exchanging the truth of God for a lie*), God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

- **Stuart Briscoe: “Confusion about God breeds confusion about man, which breeds confusion about sexuality, which produces sexual confusion and moral chaos.”**
- **Advocates of homosexuality and same-sex marriage would have us believe that objections to homosexuality are based solely on religious fundamentalists quoting obscure verses from obsolete religious texts**
- **But note carefully that Paul is not quoting from the Law of Moses here**
- **He says that homosexuality is contrary to nature – a violation of the natural order designed by the Creator – indeed a revolt against the created order**
- **A homosexual partnership – no matter how loving and committed it may claim to be – is “against nature” and therefore can never be regarded as a legitimate alternative to the marriage of a man and a woman**
- **Paul is basing his argument on natural law, not religious dogma**

J. Budziszewski: “To make proper use of a designed thing, we have to know how it works. That involves knowing its purpose -- what it's *for* -- as well as knowing how each feature contributes to the fulfillment of that purpose. In the body, the heart is for pumping blood; each valve, nerve and chamber does its part so that pumping will be achieved. No sensible surgeon tries to make the heart pump air instead of blood. The reason is simple: When you thwart a thing's design, it either works badly, stops working or breaks. Something goes terribly wrong.

The same is true of the human sexual design.

Like everything else in us, sexual powers are part of our design. You don't have to be a Christian to see that they have purposes, and you don't have to be a Christian to see what they are: One is to bond men and women; the other is to make new life. All of the other features of the sexual design revolve around these purposes. The most important such feature is that men and women are *complementary*. It's not just that they're different -- it's that their differences are *coordinated* in such a way that each contributes what the other lacks. In every dimension -- physical, emotional and intellectual -- they fit like hand and glove; they "match." This applies to both the *procreative* purpose of making babies, and the *unitive* purpose of bonding the partners together.

Procreation takes two sexes. It takes both of them, not only to make the child but to raise and teach him. To make him, both are needed because the female provides the egg that the male fertilizes. To raise him, both are needed because the female is better designed for nurture, the male for protection. To teach him, both are needed because every young one needs two models, one of his own sex, one of the other. Neither Mom nor Dad is dispensable.

In the case of every other biological function, only one body is required to do the job. A person can digest food by himself, using no other stomach but his own; he can see by himself, using no other eyes but his own; he can walk by himself, using no other legs but his own. The single exception is procreation.

If we were speaking of circulation, it would be as though the man had the right atrium and ventricle, the woman the left atrium and ventricle, and they had to come together to make a single beat.

That is precisely how it is with the procreative powers. Unless male and female come together as "one flesh"—procreation doesn't occur."

Likewise with the unitive purpose of two becoming one flesh, it also takes both sexes for the sexual union to be *fulfilled – both biologically and emotionally*.

- *What happens when men and women engage in sexual acts that are contrary to nature and to human sexual design?*

Romans 1:27 (NIV) ²⁷ Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.

- *Advocates of homosexuality and same-sex marriage would have us believe that same-sex relationships and sexual practices are remarkably similar to opposite-sex relationships and sexual practices*
- The truth is, there are radical differences

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- ***The first difference has to do with relationship duration and promiscuity even in committed relationships***
- In the Netherlands – where same-sex marriage is legal – the average duration of a committed gay relationship is 1.5 years
- *A Dutch study found that gay men with a steady partner had an average of 8 sexual partners per year*
- This may explain why in European countries that have legalized same-sex marriage, only about 3% of gays and lesbians choose to get married
- *Almost all committed gay relationships include some provision for outside sexual activity – the term used is “monogamous infidelity” describing a committed relationship with one partner while also engaging in sexual activity with others*
- For many gays, the idea of an exclusive, long-term sexual relationship with only one sex partner is regarded as a repressive heterosexual moral value that is not part of the gay experience
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- Promiscuity among gay men is not a mere stereotype – it is the norm for the gay lifestyle
- *The modal range of lifetime sexual partners for gays is 100-500 with over 20% reporting 500-1000 partners or more*
- Even the women on *Sex in the City* would have a hard time matching that
- *The extremes of male promiscuity have not been documented among lesbians, but an Australian study found that 93% of lesbians reported having had sex with men, and lesbians were 4 times more likely than heterosexual women to have had more than 50 lifetime male sex partners*
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- ***Another radical difference is sexual practices and the health risks of gay sex***
- The myth of similarity propagated by media portrayals of homosexuality disguises the reality that gay sex techniques vary significantly from those of heterosexuals
- *In order to keep this sermon at a PG or PG-13 level, I will not describe those sex practices commonly used by gays that are not part of heterosexual practice*
- Suffice it to say that Nature and Nature’s God designed male and female to have complementary sex organs that do not incur health risks when used according to God’s plan for sex and marriage
- *Heterosexual promiscuity will lead to increased health risks*
- Homosexual promiscuity also leads to increased health risks – and because the promiscuity is greater, the health risks are greater

- *But even in committed gay relationships, because many of the most common sex practices are contrary to nature's design for the human body, those sex acts carry significant health risks*
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- Gay sex is inherently unsafe – and lecturing men about using condoms is not even coming close to solving the growing health crisis among young gay men
- *In addition to HIV/AIDS, these increased health risks include anal cancer, oral cancer, syphilis, hepatitis A & B, gay bowel syndrome, intestinal parasites, herpes type 8, incontinence, rectal gonorrhea*
- Gays and lesbians also experience a far greater rate of mental health problems, substance abuse problems, suicide, and domestic violence
- *All of these health problems lead to a shortened life span*

A married heterosexual non-smoker male can expect to live to 75. If he smokes, 65. Smoking reduces life expectancy by 10 years.

Guess what the life expectancy of a gay man is? Depends whether or not he has HIV/AIDS. If yes, age 39. If he does not have HIV/AIDS, he can expect to live to age 41. Male homosexual activity is so unhealthy that it lowers a man's life expectancy by 35 years – with or without AIDS.

For example, the CDC reports that the cancer rate is 90 times higher in homosexual men. Using body parts in sexual activity contrary to their design is extremely hazardous to one's health.

- African proverb: *“Don't tear down a fence until you know why it was put up.”*
- **There is a reason why God put a fence around human sexual activity to limit it to the union of a man and a woman in marriage**
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- Thomas Schmidt: *“The most poignant way to summarize the barrage of statistics is to translate them into an illustration.*
- Suppose you were to move into a large house in San Francisco with a group of 10 randomly selected homosexual men in their mid-thirties. The relational and physical health of the group would look like this:
 - *4 of the 10 men are currently in relationships, but only one of those is faithful to his partner, and he will not be within a year.*
 - *4 have never had a relationship that lasted more than a year, and only one has had a relationship that lasted more than 3 years.*
 - *6 are having sex regularly with strangers, and the group averages almost two partners per person per month.*

- 3 of them occasionally take part in orgies. One is a sadomasochist. One prefers boys to men.
- *3 of the men are currently alcoholics, 4 have a history of drug abuse.*
- 4 have a history of acute depression, and 2 have attempted suicide.
- *8 have a history of sexually transmitted diseases, 8 currently carry infectious pathogens, and 3 currently suffer from digestive or urinary ailments.*
- At least 3 are HIV-infected, and one has AIDS.
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- *If you are not by now feeling deep compassion for men and women enslaved to such a degrading and destructive lifestyle – then you need to check your heart*

IV. THEREFORE: GOD GAVE THEM OVER...

Romans 1:24 (NIV) ²⁴Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

Romans 1:26 (NIV) ²⁶Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones.

Romans 1:28 (NIV) ²⁸Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done.

- ***You may have heard it said that God will judge our nation because of our social acceptance and approval of homosexuality***
- ***That's not what these verses are saying***
- ***“They exchanged the truth of God for a lie – BECAUSE OF THIS – God gave them over to shameful lusts and unnatural sexual relations”***
- ***Homosexuality is not the cause of God's judgment – rather, a depraved mind that is unable to tell right from wrong and natural from unnatural – leading to unnatural sexual relations – that is the Judgment***

Romans 1:18 (NIV) ¹⁸The wrath of God **is being revealed** from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness,

- ***Not – WILL be revealed – but – IS being revealed***
- ***How?***
- ***God gave them over to degrading passions and unnatural sexual relations and a depraved mind to do what ought not to be done***

- **God gave them over – The wrath of God is being revealed by God giving man the absolute freedom to choose his own course of action and then to live with the consequences**
- **He allows sin to run its course as an act of Judgment**
- **The practice and acceptance of homosexuality is the symptom – not the root disease – the Result of God’s Judgment, not its cause**
- **John Piper: “The root of all our disorders – sexual and social and physical and emotional – is the exchange of the glory of God for other things.”**
- **The result of mankind’s liberation from God and His moral law?**
- **Shelly is getting herself drunk so that she can bring herself to go home with the strange man seated next to her at the bar**
- **Steven is busy downloading pornographic images of children from the Internet**
- **Marjorie, who used to spend every Friday night in bed with a different man, has been binging and purging since she was 11**
- **Pablo stares through the darkness at the ceiling, wondering how to convince his girlfriend to have an abortion**
- **After partying all night, Robert takes another man home, not mentioning that he tests positive for an incurable STD**
- **Brokenness // chaos // bondage // confusion // disillusionment // despair**

V. WE HAVE NO EXCUSE... WE ARE ALL CONDEMNED

- **If you are starting to feel like the Pharisee at the Temple in Jesus’ parable: Thank God that I am not like other men – sexually immoral // promiscuous // homosexuals // secular, godless liberals who believe in evolution and abortion and socialism and same-sex marriage... – Paul isn’t done yet – and neither is this sermon (almost done, though)**
- **In Romans 2 & 3, Paul has few choice words for the religious and moral and righteous people of his day, the Jews**

Romans 2:1-3 You may be saying, “What terrible people you have been talking about!” But you are just as bad, and you have no excuse! When you say they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you do these very same things. ²And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things. ³Do you think that God will judge and condemn others for doing them and not judge you when you do them, too?

Romans 3:23 (NIV) ²³for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God,

- *Who among us has clean hands and a clean heart when it comes to our sexuality?*
- *Who among us has never sought sexual pleasure or stimulation apart from making love to our wife or husband?*
- *Who among us has never looked at another woman lustfully or fantasized about another man inappropriately?*
- *All of humanity is fallen – and all of us display some evidence of that fallenness in our sexual desires, thoughts and practices*
- *Not to mention our anger issues and dishonesty issues and our money issues and sins of the tongue such as gossip and slander and grumbling and complaining*

- *None of us is in a position to throw stones at gays or lesbians or adulterers*
- *By the end of chapter 3, Paul has demonstrated that we are all in the same boat – we are all under the power of sin – all justly condemned and under the wrath of God – with no hope of justifying ourselves by our own good works*
- *That is why we need the Gospel*

VI. THE GOSPEL: THE ONLY REMEDY

Romans 3:20-22 ²⁰For no one can ever be made right in God's sight by doing what his law commands. For the more we know God's law, the clearer it becomes that we aren't obeying it. ²¹But now God has shown us a different way of being right in his sight—not by obeying the law but by the way promised in the Scriptures long ago. ²²We are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins. And we all can be saved in this same way, no matter who we are or what we have done.

- *God has done for us in Jesus Christ what we could never do for ourselves*
- *He has placed all of our sin and guilt on His Perfect Son, Jesus Christ, who bore all the just punishment for our sins – and then He has bestowed on all who trust in Christ the Perfect Righteousness of Christ Himself*
- *Thus we are made right in God's sight when we trust in Jesus Christ to take away our sins*
- *And we can all be saved in this same way – no matter who we are or what we have done – no matter whether we are Jew or Gentile – no matter whether we are heterosexual or homosexual or bisexual – no matter whether we have lived a life of chastity or promiscuity*

- ***All of us can be made righteous in God's sight and set free from all condemnation by faith in Jesus Christ***
- **No one is good enough to be accepted by God on the basis of their own righteousness – only the Perfect Righteousness of Christ will suffice**
- ***And no one is bad enough to be excluded from God's family on the basis of their sins or immorality – the blood of Jesus is powerful enough to wash away all of the worst of our sins***

Salvation Prayer

"Grace Like Rain"