
Romans: Gospel People

Midweek Bible Study

Week 3 - Romans 1:18-32: The futility of life apart from God



1:17,18 ...is being revealed...

is being revealed - gk. *apokalyptetai* - from which we get apocalypse, this revelation is ongoing and has a future fulfilment (eschatological)

1:16-20 Fourfold revelation

God reveals his glory to all in creation - (19-20)

God reveals his wrath against the sin of those who suppress the truth - this revealed knowledge of the creator (18)

God reveals his righteousness in the gospel (his righteous way of declaring sinners right with himself) (17)

God reveals his power in the gospel through the salvation of believers (16)

1:18

wrath - gk. *orge* - can also be translated anger, problem of confusion with attributes of human anger

God's wrath is his deep abhorrence of sin and his just judgment against it and its perpetrators.

godlessness - gk. *asebeia*, directed against God

wickedness - gk. *adikia*, directed against men

“who suppress the truth in their wickedness”

John Stott says,

“they have made an *a priori* decision to live for themselves, rather than for God and for others, and therefore deliberately stifle any truth which challenges their self-centredness.”

1:19-20 General revelation

General revelation	Special revelation
made to everyone	made to specific people in specific places
natural - in the natural order of things	supernatural - through the incarnation of Jesus, the inspiration of scripture, the power of the Holy Spirit
continuous - day after day, night after night	final - complete in Jesus and Scripture, also given at specific times by the Holy Spirit in accordance with Christ
Creational - revealing God's glory in creation	Salvific - revealing God's glory and grace in Christ

Parallels between Genesis 1-3 and Romans 1

- creation of the world (20)
- birds, animals and reptiles (23)
- glory of the immortal God, images/likeness (23)
- knowledge of God (19, 21)
- resolve to become wise (22)
- refusal to be a dependant creature (18, 21)
- exchange of God's truth for Satan's lie (25)
- rebellion leads to death (32)

1:21-32

People's (limited) knowledge of God	People's rejection of God for idols	God's wrathful response
they knew God (21)	they neither glorified God, nor gave thanks to him (21)	he gave them over to sexual impurity (24)
the truth of God (25)	they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served created things rather than the creator (25)	he gave them over to shameful lusts (26)
the knowledge of God (28)	they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God (28)	he gave them over to a depraved mind (28)

Idolatry leads to immorality

“Illicit sex degrades people’s humanness; sex in marriage, as God intended, enables it.”

John Stott

1:26-27

natural - gk. *physikos*

unnatural - gk. *para physin*, lit. against nature

John Stott writes,

“The intention of the creator means his original intention. What this was Genesis tells us and Jesus confirmed: ‘At the beginning the creator made them male and female’ and said ‘for this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two shall become one flesh’ So they are no longer two but one.’ Then Jesus added his own personal endorsement and deduction: ‘Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.’ (Matthew 19:4) In other words God created humankind male and female, God instituted marriage as a heterosexual union; and what God has thus united, we have no liberty to separate. This threefold action of God established that the only context which he intends for the ‘one flesh’ experience is heterosexual monogamy, and that a homosexual partnership (however loving and committed it may claim to be) is ‘against nature’ and can never be regarded as a legitimate alternative to marriage.”

Some questions for discussion

Are there times when we suppress the truth in our lives? If so, how?

How should we respond to sin (think of different circumstances)?

What wrong views of God might we and other Christians struggle with? How might they affect our walk with God?

How do we welcome people as Christ welcomed them and at the same time challenge them as Christ did? What might be the challenges we face as we do so?

Are you ever tempted to approve actions of others that you wouldn’t do yourself? Can you think of an example (real or fictional)?

How do we avoid being judgmental like the Pharisees and at the same time stay faithful to Christ?

