

All right. Let's open our Bibles tonight to Romans 1:24 as we continue our verse-by-verse study through this very difficult and good book.

We told you a couple of weeks ago when we started that the book of Romans was written by Paul from Corinth about 58 or so A.D. He was in Corinth for about three months. There was a lady named Phoebe, who lived on the coast in one of the port cities, who was headed for Rome; wanted a letter of recommendation. Paul had never been to Rome, but he knew people there - especially Aquila and Priscilla, his friends. And so, as he wrote this letter of recommendation - which you'll find in the last chapter of the book - out came this theological masterpiece that has been the cause of tons of folks coming to know Christ and giving to Him their lives.

So Paul writes this wonderful book about three things: sin, salvation and sanctification. Sin, salvation and sanctification. The three S's. But he really makes the case for how dark sin is and how pervasive it is in our lives and how much we need God's help to deliver us; that it isn't just a matter of, "Well, sin is sin, we all sin," but how serious it is before a holy God and how God wants to deliver us from it.

In the first seventeen verses or so - we spent two weeks looking at his introduction - because they had not known Paul (he had not been there), he spends a little bit more time than he might have. But then, starting in verse 23, he begins the first of these three major divisions of the book - talking about sin. And it really is his major focus through chapter 8, though he will speak a lot about the salvation God has brought. He literally leaves no stone unturned trying to communicate to us how God sees sin: what is the doctrine of man's sinfulness? And so in verse 18 through verse 23 last week he gave us some very precise language about sin. And the basic lesson from last week - if you weren't with us - is that God has revealed Himself to man in two ways: within, by our conscience, that we know, whether we have a Bible or not, right and wrong just because the way God has wired us up. Paul will later say, "If a Gentile without the law does what is right because he knows it's right, he's responding to that revelation of God" (Romans 2:14-15). So God's revelation within, to all man, is our conscience. Right? We have an awareness of right from wrong. And then outside of us, or around us, by His

creation He has given to us absolute proof of His existence, that everything that we see demands that there be a Creator. Paul said last week, because of sin, man, though, sets aside those obvious helps to bring us to a place where we want to cry out, "God, where are You?" or "Who are You? I want to know You" and begins to suppress the truths that he has been clearly given so that he might then pursue a life without God. And so that sin seeks to isolate us. We turn from God's revelation within and without, and we begin to follow after, with self-confidence, our own rationalization, our own idolatry (in the sense of we worship a god that we have created for ourselves, if you will), and over time, that will bring upon us the wrath of God.

Imagine how awesome it is to realize that God's love for you has given you both an avenue and an ability to know Him. God hasn't left Himself without a witness. He's done it within, He's given it to you without. To those who desire to know Him, He can be found. To those who continue to willfully reject the testimony that God makes of Himself, there comes a time of wrath, and the consequences of that rejection, over time, lead you down a very dark path. So, the key words last week: suppression of the truth. We suppress it in our hearts, we suppress it in our minds, it leads us to the perversion of the truth in the sense that we begin to rationalize what we do. Ultimately it leads to a perversion of our lifestyle, which is exactly what Paul gives us here towards the end of this chapter.

If you continue to deny God's revelation of Himself, you eventually gain God's release. He gives you over to the life you demand. He says, "If that's what you want, here, have it." But that's really not what any of us want to hear. And His wrath, in many ways, is simply the removal of any restraint that He's put upon your life. He just pulls His hands away. He lets your life go in the direction that you want so that sin becomes its own reward. You want that life? You can have that life. But with it comes all of the suffering that that life involves.

The main point tonight, in our verses from verse 24-32, is that if we continue to refuse God, God will eventually refuse us, and He'll give us what we want - a life without God. But if you think about that, if we abandon God and God abandons us, just look how our life is going to turn out. This downward spiral with no restraint. Oscar Wilde, a famous writer (not a believer), wrote one time in one of his books, "When the gods want to punish us, they answer our prayers." In that sense, he's right, in the Romans-book sense. Tonight God's response to man's refusal is to just leave man alone. But at what cost?

And so three times tonight - in verse 24, 26, verse 28 - we will read the words "God gave them up" or "God gave them over." God let them go. One of the reprisals that we find from God's hand when it comes to dealing with us is that God gives us what we want. In Psalm 81:11-12, the psalmist writes, "But My people would not heed My voice, and Israel would have none of Me. So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, to walk in their own counsels." When Hosea came upon the scene and the nation was in rebellion to the LORD, God said to Hosea (chapter 4), "Don't pray for Ephraim. Ephraim has joined herself to idols. Just leave her alone." So there is a place that you can get in your life - because of sin - where the punishment is really fitting the crime. You can have what you ask for. When Stephen spoke there, to the religious leaders, in Acts 7, and he talked to them about the Lord, he said, at the time they were worshipping the gods of heaven and as it is written in the prophets, God said, "Go and offer your slain beasts to them." In other words, "Don't look to Me for help. You're on your own." When the LORD sent the prophet to King Asa - the prophet Azariah - he met him coming back from a battle (there in 2 Chronicles 15). He said, "Look, I have a word from the LORD for you," and he said, "What is it?" He said, "The LORD said He'll be with you while you'll be with Him. And you'll find Him. But if you forsake Him, He's going to forsake you." Now that's the awful reality of sin that isn't dealt with, that isn't repented of, that God seeks to bring us to Him, and yet we don't listen.

So, from last week, the revelation from within, the revelation from without, the willingness - because of sin - to suppress that truth in unrighteousness, seeking to develop our own system of beliefs. And notice in verse 24 the words that we start tonight with, "Therefore." Therefore. Because they have not glorified God when they knew Him as God, they weren't thankful, they were fleshly in their hearts, they were foolish, they professed themselves to be wise, they changed the glory of an incorruptible God into an image like an animal, they began to worship idols. "Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen." Therefore. When man gives up God willfully and defiantly in the face of clear revelation, God will therefore abandon him, give him over to what he's asking for. And think about it. Divine abandonment is a terrifying thought, isn't it? That God would just go, "I'm done with you." I don't ever want to hear that! I don't want to hear that ever. I don't want you to ever hear that as well. But from verse 21 and 22 and verse 23, when a man begins to fashion an image of God in the form of another man or a created being, he begins

to lower God from His place of honor. He begins to fashion a god after his own creation. He is insensate, he is base, he can't speak, he can't think, he can't move. You've made your god a little lower than yourself.

Now notice the words in verse 24, "God gave them up." And I want to point out to you that God giving them up here is in an indirect sense. By that I mean God simply takes His restraining hand from your life, and He allows the inevitable consequences of the choices that you're making to follow a destructive course. So sin begins to ruin your life. It ruins your marriage. It ruins your relationships. It invades families. It destroys nations. God doesn't need to do anything more than to say, "Have what you want." Now there are certainly times in the Bible where God involves Himself directly; not indirectly (as this) but directly in judgment. The flood in Noah's day was a direct action of God. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, a direct action of God against sin. The constant overthrow of the children of Israel by their enemies during, let's say, the period of the judges. The captivity of Babylon that we've been looking at a lot on Sunday morning. Or even these final judgments that we just finished in the book of Revelation. They are both the direct and then the indirect judgments of God against sin. In both of the cases, you find God's mercy. Because although not everyone is interested about their sin or their need to repent or their need for a Savior, most everyone is immediately concerned with the unpleasant consequences of sin. And sometimes the judgment of God - directly or indirectly - brings people to their senses. They'd had enough. "I don't want to live this kind of life. I've tasted it. I hate it. I don't want to live this way." And the very fact that God goes, "Have it your way" at some point gets you on your face, and you begin to cry out, "God, I don't want to have it done my way. My way isn't workin' out for me at all."

So, when man is released from God's restraining power, quickly the lusts of his heart begin to plunge him into uncleanness. History bears it out. Read the history of the Greeks or even of the Romans, and you will find that both cultures achieved phenomenal things. They were brilliant in their minds. They were creators of things in achievements that were just beyond scope. And yet, because of the perverseness of their culture, they weren't defeated from without; they were destroyed from within. Because that's how sin works. And there are so many awful things; if you read the Roman - well especially the Roman - history, you probably should read it with your children in bed because the things are awful to read. I couldn't bring them up here and read them to you. I wouldn't have any comfort level at all. It was that bad, and it destroyed the civilization.

In the context here, much of the idolatry in Paul's day included the immorality of Canaanite worship so that you found in the worship of Baal these lewd, sexual practices, temple prostitutes, even human sacrifice. And Paul is sitting in Corinth, one of the centers of these things - serpent worship, eunuchs as priests, the wholesale practice of homosexuality and their worship. And notice what the Lord calls these actions of sexual sin. He says, in verse 24, "I'll give them over to the lusts of their hearts," which God calls "uncleanness." And at least the word "uncleanness" here is the word for "decay." Something is rotting inside, and that rotting is sin. And it leads us to dishonor our body through lust. The word "*epithumid*" is literally the word for "craving" or "desire," if you will. It is the very, kind of, wicked unclean heart from which God delivers us when we look to Him. Paul would write to these Corinthians (1 Corinthians 6:13), later on, "Meat is for your belly, and the belly is for meat. God shall destroy both it and them. But your body is not for fornication. Your body is for the Lord." Which is an absolute difference from the practices that you find within the people living in Corinth.

So we read, in verse 25, they "exchanged the truth of God for the lie." Back in verse 19 and verse 20, the truth of God was that we could know Him from within and, verse 20, know Him from without, that His eternal power and Godhead are on display; we can understand those things that have been made; we can know God, who we can't see, through the things that He's done; we're without excuse. That, in verse 25, is called "the truth of God." Those are the truths of God, His revelation. But man, in his sin, changes that truth for a lie, and the lie here is defined as moving from Creator worship to creature worship. Here's the thing: man needs God. God made you and me to worship. But if the truth of God is set aside, we're now left as slaves to our desires, our lusts, that which sin has produced. And, in the context here, it speaks of the idolatry with the sexual sins and perversions as man, as an animal now rather than spiritual, is driven to fulfill his desires without constraint but having no spiritual oversight of those desires. So spiritually, "dishonoring their bodies amongst themselves" is an outgrowth of setting God's truth aside for a lie. When you don't have God's truth, hey, you're really set up for just about anything. And when man begins to live with himself that way - and because he has to face himself - he quickly begins to rationalize his evil deeds to appease his conscience. And the only way you can do that is you change your perception about God. So he'll challenge the Bible, he'll try to customize it and bring it up to date, and fit it into the culture, and redefine it in so-called "words of wisdom" that will accommodate his belief system which has to accommodate his flesh. So God says this, "I'm giving them up because they're going to change the

truth of God into a lie." And since they do that, their worship is carnal, creature-driven, sensual, if you will. No devotion to the Lord at all. It's just this worshipping of the creature rather than the Creator, all as a result of refusing the truth of God's revelation about Himself.

Verse 26 says, "For this reason God gave them up" (second time) "to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due." For this reason God gave them up (a), verse 24, to uncleanness, dishonoring their bodies amongst themselves. Second step, gave them up to vile - the word is "shameful" - passions, beginning to act according to the very nature in which God made them. And he uses the word "vile," which is a very strong Hebrew word. It would suggest that this step from verse 24 is another downward step to verse 25 and verse 26. Paul will speak, and does speak, of homosexuality and lesbianism as the extremities of man's fall into depravity. It starts in verse 24 with sexual sin. It develops into perversion before it finds that the society itself is destroyed. So the fall is from the natural, if you will, sin to the unnatural sin all because, if you go back to verses 18-23, we've refused God's revelation of Himself. If you read the book of Jonah, the prophet who was running from the LORD (it's a very short book, it doesn't take you long to read it), when you read through it, you will constantly read the repetition of the word "down." He goes "down" to Joppa, he goes "down" to the ship, he goes "down" to the bottom of the sea. So God gives to them an ability to go down, to go away from everything that God would want us to have.

So, verse 24, sexual uncleanness. Verse 26 and verse 27 is sexual perversion which follows whenever God gives up men and women to the things that they lust for because they are willingly suppressing the truth. We put God out of our minds. We look at creation and God's Word in our hearts, and we choose sin over the Lord. And so from within and without we refuse. And so what happens? You get lusts first, perversions second. It is hard, if you believe these verses, to make the claim that homosexuals are created that way anymore than you go to verse 24, and go, "Well, fornicators are created that way." Right? Or those who would commit adultery are born that way. No. They make choices. All you have to do is back up five or six verses. When they knew God, they chose not to follow Him. When they knew God, they chose not to respond to Him. When they had the evidence - both within and without - they decided to turn it off. And setting God aside, this is the

road they go down. You know, man becomes promiscuous and perverted in behavior when he constantly refuses to retain God in his mind or seek to honor the Lord with his life. So he replaces Him with rationale and with idolatry, and God gives him what he wants. The good news is - and I'll tell you what, the good news starts in verse 21 of chapter 3 - that God has a Deliverer to come; that His Son has been sent to deliver us from this kind of a life that has taken us down this dark road; that if you'll submit to Jesus, He can deliver you.

But notice that Paul is describing the state of unnatural appetites where all normal instincts have been left behind. It starts in verse 24 with just adultery, fornication. But then it steps down to the perversion of doing those things that are now no longer natural. So the progression is from ordinary lust to far less-than-ordinary. It, I'm sure, would be surprising to us what's going on in this world of sin around the world. I was born in Holland. We've been to Amsterdam. Amsterdam's a very liberal place. There're places you probably shouldn't walk around at night. It's unbelievable the things that they allow. So I can just imagine that this goes on far more than maybe you see with your own eyes. There's no freedom in sin's availability. There's no freedom in having sin available to you. It just kind of takes you out. It is the depths to which Sodom and Gomorrah fell prior to God's judgment. You might say to yourself - well, why would Paul take sexual sin as an example? I mean, there're certainly other things that he might have spoken about. And I think that Paul uses it, in one sense, to show the extent to which sin will drive man when he is abandoned to his lusts, even to the point where he desires things that are contrary to his very creation. Right? The obviously unnatural. These sins are obvious, they are tied to lust, they are sins that are life-dominating sins.

So Paul emphasizes this sin because, well, for one thing, it was very prevalent in Corinth. Greek culture taught that homosexual love was the purest and the highest form of love. Fourteen of the first fifteen emperors were practicing homosexuals. Documented historically. Many states today approve the legislation to allow homosexual partners to legally be recognized as parents, in marriage, and life insurance, and state benefits, and adoptions. There're a lot of churches today that are trying to become contemporary. I don't want to be contemporary. I would rather stick with the Scriptures and not support anything that is contrary to what the Bible has to teach. Those who champion homosexual causes I don't think would champion the cause of the adulterer. "I have my rights. I'm an adulterer. I should be able to do what I want!" "I'm a fornicator! I got a shirt 'I am a fornicator.' I'd

like to have a march." The one who sleeps around, plays the field. But both of them are, here, given to us as consequences of refusing to identify and then follow the Lord of glory. Notice the word, verse 24, "Therefore" and the words, verse 26, "For this reason." One is lust; the other one is perversion.

In both the Old and New Testaments, by the way, God's Word is absolutely clear about condemning all three of them: fornication, adultery, homosexuality. It certainly isn't....and done so in the most....in the strongest of terms (maybe I can say it that way). It is a sin, it is a choice, it is made by those who refuse the revelation of God, and so they're given over to what their flesh dictates. Adultery dishonors the body in natural terms, homosexuality in unnatural terms. But it's still the same response.

In verse 27, Paul finishes his thought on this subject with a kind of ominous statement. He says, "They receive in themselves the penalty of their error which was due." I don't know....well, you probably have not necessarily had to sit in marriage counseling when husbands or wives are unfaithful to each other. But I could just tell you the horror that you hear, the distrust, the divorce, the violence, the kids suffering. It really is a built-in destructive force. When it comes to homosexuality, even today, kids with their personal identity issues and uncertainty of their roles....this is all the result of sin. Part of the outworking of the wrath of God is allowing the consequences of sin in our lives. On the positive side, fear of those things can keep us from, sometimes, pursuing those things down the road. But sexual depravity is not the only evidence and the consequence of setting God aside. So don't get locked on this one subject because notice the rest of these verses where Paul gives us this ever-expanding list of the outworking of a life that has set God to the side.

And, for the third time, in verse 28, we read, "And even as they did not like to retain God in their knowledge," (and you see, that's a choice) "God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting;" (and then) "being filled with all" and then there's a whole list of what that debased mind looks like. Retribution as God allows man to pursue his fearful end, if that's the path you want to go down, that he chooses. And Paul, looking at the mind that refuses God's revelation of Himself, piles one word upon another to show that wickedness knows no bounds in terms of behavior and choice and practice. So a debased mind follows the choice of not believing God's revelation of Himself. And that debasing - and the word "debased," in Greek, means "worthless" or it means "violated" or "corrupt"

or "rejected" - it's a mind that has set God to the side. But this debased mind. Right? He rejects God and His thoughts, he rejects God in his understanding, he chooses to no longer keep God in his mind and in his knowledge. And so God says, "Great. Then you can have a mind that chooses to be led by everything except Me." And into his heart and into his character and conversation and conduct and companionship come these things that the Bible describes here as "not fitting." This is not the way God wants man to live. This is not the way God would want it for any of us.

So, what follows is a list of some of the contents of a depraved mind in action, and it's a sad picture. Verse 28 says, "God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting; being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them." Pretty powerful list. For the third time, "God gives them over." If you see fit to cast God out of your mind, God sees fit to leave. And that doesn't happen overnight. You know God's patience and His mercy and His longsuffering, but this is the road that you're on. Right? Man begins to do that which is "not fitting" in God's eyes.

In these verses, we have a list of twenty-one word descriptions to show a corrupt mind. How can we face.....this is like the unmasking. Right? Here's man without God. And I won't belabor every one of the words, but you can certainly sit and think about each one of them and find yourself just shaking your head, that this is how sin works.

The word "unrighteousness" here is a word that literally means "not pleasing to God," not lining up with what God wants or, if you will, selfishness has been enthroned. "Sexual immorality" - you will read some commentaries that they've left out these words, "sexual immorality," and people will make the argument "immorality" shouldn't be in here. Well, it's mentioned eighteen other places, so we're okay either way. But, needless to say, we've spoken a lot about that tonight. The word "wickedness" here is the word for "malice," evil purposes, if you will. The word "covetousness." Covetousness literally is defined as "an itch for more." You just want more. Right? It's greediness, it's more than one's due. You're never

satisfied. You're always over-reaching. It's what sin will do. The word "maliciousness" is exactly what you think it would mean - ill will and the desire that others are hurt. "Envy" means "to be filled." Literally the word means "filled with it." Not full of it, filled with it. Not just wanting what others have but actively wishing they didn't have it. It wasn't enough to go, "I need that instead of them, and I wish they didn't have it." "Murder" is... envy, in Greek, and murder are both spelled very similarly. Oftentimes they lead one to the other, and it's almost a word play. They're placed together a lot in these lists of sinfulness, the way it works out in our lives. "Strife" is the word for "contentiousness," which means argumentative, debating....you know, the guy that can't just let it go. The word for "deceit" means "to bait with a hook." It's like the fine print when you buy something or how do you say what you say or didn't say, deceitfully. "Evil-mindedness," you see everything in an evil sense. There's no simplicity, there's no honesty. That's what sin will do. "Whisperers," in Greek, it's the word for making a hissing sound. That's how it's used.....private peddlers of evil reports and secret slanderers. And then the word "backbiters" follows. So if whisperers are secret slanderers, backbiters are open slanderers. They're just not ashamed to say what they think. "Haters of God" is a very strong word. It literally means to "outwardly and aggressively and vehemently hate God." It's not enough to, "I don't believe in Him. I'm sorry you do." It's like, "You shouldn't believe in Him either." Right? There's that attack upon you. The word for "violent" is just that, "injurious" or "seeking to harm." "Proud" is the word for "arrogant," where you see yourself above others. "Boasters" is kind of married to proud. "Inventors of evil things." No longer are you just a tool of the devil; you now are a factory. You're now the producer of evil; you've come up with new things, generating new evils. "Disobedient to parents." Literally it reads "not persuaded by parents." Interesting. Paul wrote in 2 Timothy 3, in the last days this'll be one of the signs. There'll be this breakdown of the family unit. And then notice, in verse 31, there are these five "uns:" "undiscerning" - that means no moral ability to make the right choice or see clearly; the word "untrustworthy" - obviously faithless, covenant breaker; "unloving" - no natural affection; "unforgiving" - not able to make truce or cease hostility or to be placated, forgive; "unmerciful" - what God delights in, you do not.

And then finally this last step in verse 32. Again, it goes back to choice. You know what's right and wrong. God has given you that capacity. So even though you know that that lifestyle will bring God's judgment, you just do it anyway. You just do it anyway. It doesn't matter if there's death involved or suffering involved, I do it

anyway. And the last step of this downward spiral of unbelief in a life is to find joy in other people doing what you know you shouldn't do yourself. So you take pleasure and delight in those who are doing evil things. Imagine sitting in the Roman Colosseum cheering on the guilty ones who are throwing the Christians to the lions. "Well I wouldn't do it, but it's sure fun to see 'em run!" Those in the seats are more guilty still. How does that apply to us? Well, we live in a pretty media-captivated society where millions of people sit at night watching TV and violence and promiscuity and deceit and say, "Well, yeah, I wouldn't do that, but it's kind of fun to watch." And we find ourselves, by our weekly attendance in movie dollars, doing the same thing. It really doesn't make any difference if the vice is portrayed or is realistic; the effect is the same. Your mind becomes depraved.

So I remember Thomas Aquinas, and I remember reading him as a Catholic because, well, he's a Catholic guy. But he wrote in one of his books - he did a study on Psalm 8, and he said, "The Bible says that man was made a little lower than the angels." And he said, "So here're the angels, and here's man, and here're the animals." He said, "So you have a choice. You can go up or down." And I thought it was a good point. Right? Your prerogative is to move up or down. If you have rejected the Lord, you're going to hit rock bottom.

If you want an example of how our society is today, our culture, at this point, has not been able to come up with a uniform code of ethics to define what pornography is. They leave it to individual cities. You'd think we could come up with a definition. But, you know, depravity won't allow it.

So, Paul's point, as he goes through this list, especially towards the end of chapter 1, is pretty straightforward. God has made Himself known. Man has just chosen not to respond to the light he's been given. He loves darkness rather than the light. So he walks away from the light. And, rather than being moved by, "Who made the stars and the heavens? Where is the Creator? What does He want from me?" you find yourself saying, well, I've got my own life to live. I redefine the terms. I set God aside. I willfully suppress the truth in unrighteousness (verse 18). What I know of God - what God has shown me, what God has done around me, is not enough so I don't glorify Him. Instead, I become futile in my thoughts, my foolish heart gets darkened, I profess myself to be wise, and I become a fool. And here's the progression. Now sexual sin becomes acceptable. Sexual perversions become commonplace. And I find myself running down this road where the Lord gives me up to the way of life that I've decided I want for myself. When He has

much more in mind and much greater things in mind for each of us. And then these twenty-one descriptive terms that basically say you can go wrong in a hundred different ways, but it is all tied to the one thing that matters (back in verses 18 and 19): God let Himself be known, and we decided we don't want anything to do with Him.

The good news is in the midst of that kind of spiral of sin, God comes looking for you. Right? He comes knocking at your door. He reminds you of who He is. Somebody comes and gives you a gospel and tells you of God's forgiveness and of the death of His Son and how He can pull you out of the mire and put your feet upon the Rock. But it is in this downward spiral that man finds himself. You set God aside, you can't but go this way. You can clean up your life. Everybody goes, "He's an upstanding young man." Well, maybe so in the eyes of the world but not in the eyes of the Lord. And it only gets worse; it doesn't get better. Against this backdrop of darkness we are called to make a mark for His glory by our testimony, by our lifestyle, preaching Jesus who can save His people from their sin (Matthew 1:21). He can turn midnight into noon if you'll let Him. But Paul wants to be sure he hammers down on this whole idea of sin.

Now, when we get to chapter 2, Paul will turn from the perversion of the Greek and Roman cultures to the guy that says to you or me, "I'm not that guy. I'd never cheat on my wife. I certainly wouldn't be involved with the temple prostitutes. I'm a good guy. I love my kids, I go to work every day." So Paul goes, "All right. I've got a word for you righteous sinners," and he will take them on next, in chapter 2, because it really doesn't matter how flagrant your sin is. Sin is still sin, and we still need to be redeemed by the Lord. And he will talk to us about the universality of sin and the certainty of God's judgment according to our works, which should reflect our hearts. And then, as we get toward the end of chapter 2, in chapter 3, the question becomes - all right, if my works can't save me, as a Jew, what good am I? What benefit am I being God's child? And then Paul will explain the kinds of arguments that he's constantly heard before, in verse 21 of chapter 3, saying the righteousness of God can be found by faith in His Son. And if you believe in Him, it doesn't matter what your background is. There's no difference. You can be saved. But he wants to be sure that you're.....I think what he wants to do is beat you to death on the ground so you can't get up, you feel so bad. And then he goes, "Look, I've got Jesus here for you. You can get up now." But at least we hate sin the way God does.

So read ahead. We're going to do I don't know how many verses next week. We'll do some. So stop when you get to some, would you?

Submitted by Maureen Dickson
December 12, 2021