

Romans 1:24-25
 Becoming A Gracious People
 RO1705

January 29, 2017 AM
 Romans

Given Over to Dishonor

INTRODUCTION: I watched the Inaugural Events, last Friday, January 20, and I came to a conclusion about American Culture ...

1. We are a deeply divided and deeply conflicted people because we are uncertain about what we value most.
2. As I listened to **Sen. Roy Blunt** (chairman of the Joint Congressional Committee on Inaugural Ceremonies) talk about our heritage I was extremely glad to be an American.
 - a) 58th American Presidential Inauguration – without a break in the process of a peaceful transfer of power.
 - b) The gentlemanly way Mr. Obama and Mr. Trump treated one another.
 - c) The civility and kindness of the congressmen and senators at the Inaugural luncheon, etc. ...
 - d) *Made me proud to be an American*: Law, Order, decency, commitment to principles.
3. Blocks away rioting was taking place: Violence simply because some people lost the vote! I was very apprehensive about America.
 - a) massive destruction of private and business property.
 - b) assaults upon policemen, firemen and news-people
 - c) disorder and danger in our Capitol's streets
 - d) And the following day the massive march of thousands of women: vulgar language, profanity, crudeness of every form.
 - e) *Made me ashamed to be an American* - lawlessness!
4. I saw this as a *living parable* of Romans 1; two powerful forces in collision, and in public.
 - a) The Kingdom of God: the force of moral order and righteousness

For the kingdom of God is not a matter of eating and drinking but of righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17)
 - b) The Kingdom of the Self: the force of personal sin at any cost that leads to decadence, degradation and defilement.

Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1:32)
5. There is a **tipping point** in the life of a society beyond which moral order, community decency and dignified living is impossible. Beyond this point there awaits only destruction for the Nation.
6. Paul exhorts us to pray for a good and noble life for our nation:
 - a) *First of all, then, I urge that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and thanksgivings be made for all people, for kings and all who are in high positions, that we may lead a peaceful and*

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quiet life, godly and dignified in every way. This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. For there is one God, and there is one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all, which is the testimony given at the proper time. (1 Tim. 2:1-6)

- b) The very Scripture **Franklin Graham** read at President Trump's Inauguration Ceremony
- c) "a peaceful and quiet life, godly and dignified in every way" (2:2)
- d) This is God's will for all mankind

This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth. (1 Tim. 2:3-4)

7. **Listen carefully:** *When a people choose to live otherwise, then God gives them over to the consequences of their sinful ways until they pay the ultimate price. As these remedial judgments take place, God is providing that people with warning signs that the tipping point is quickly approaching.*

8. This is exactly what was happening to the Greco-Roman Society and the Empire of Caesar's Rome when Paul penned The Letter to the Romans in 56 A.D.

- a) Rome had reached the *zenith* of its power and glory under **Julius Caesar** (49-44 B.C.)
- b) **Octavian Augustus** (49-27 B.C. Co-Consul; 27 BC-14 AD) The birth and youth of Christ
 - (1) *Lex Julia* (laws enacted by Augustus Caesar)
 - (2) Promoted marriage and childbearing; punished both adultery and divorce, penalties for not marrying or having children, penalizing of bribery.
 - (3) Fathers could kill adulterous daughters, banishment to different islands for adulterous couples, husbands could divorce/ kill adulterous wives.
 - (4) Note: Augustus banished his own daughter, *Julia*, for adultery.
 - (5) **Sadly**, all this was to no effect. The moral slide continued ...
- c) **Tiberius** (14-37 AD) – married twice
- d) **Caligula** (37-41 AD) – married four times, violent, immoral Caesar.
- e) **Claudius** (41-54 AD) – four wives; one was his niece. Exiled Jews from Rome (42 AD)
- f) **Nero: The Monster** (54-69 AD) – Persecution of Christians begun, the burning of Rome, murdered by his own citizens
 - (1) Killed his mother, his first wife was murdered, he kicked his second wife to death while she was pregnant, and while married to his third wife (who committed prostitution for him), he married a young man.
 - (2) Nero martyred both Peter and Paul
 - (3) Rome eventually killed Nero out of both fear of him and disgust.
- g) In the early days of Nero's reign Paul wrote the Epistle to Rome.

9. God was giving Rome over to the consequences of their own sinful way of life –

a) *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. For although they knew God, they did not honor him as God or give thanks to him, but they became futile in their thinking, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things. (Romans 1:18-23)*

b) **Charles R. Erdman:** *Epistle to the Romans*; p. 39

Paul shows how “the wrath of God” has been revealed (vs. 24-32). It has been manifested in his abandonment of the heathen to the consequences of their guilt. They willfully turned from him, and became worshipers of idols, and he therefore allowed them to suffer the inevitable result of an ever-deepening moral degradation. In this degeneration, Paul notes three stages, each one marked by the statement, “God gave them up” (vs. 24, 26, 28).

c) God gave them over to **dishonored bodies ...**

(1) *Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. (Romans 1:24-25 NASB)*

(2) literally: God gave them up to *uncleanness*

d) God gave them over to **degrading passions ...**

(1) *For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. (Romans 1:26-27 NASB)*

(2) God gave them up to *vile passions*

e) God gave them over to **debased minds ...**

(1) *And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; (Romans 1:28-31 NASB)*

(2) God gave them up to *reprobate minds*

f) ... until the society and culture *approved* of godless, lawless, immoral living –

Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them. (Romans 1:32)

10. American Christians read these 9 verses and say, “*Oh no! This is a description of 21st Century American Culture!*” In truth, it is!
11. We arrive at this conclusion because we see, in the past 40 years, the moral floodgates opened:
- Legalized abortion in 1973
 - Common Law marriages: adopted from ancient Rome!
 - Repeal of sodomy laws
 - Same Sex marriage in 2015
 - LGBT advances in the past 8 years under *Obama*
12. But, *in fact*, America’s moral slide began back in the 1920’s and grew into a moral breakdown by the end of World War II. And it began with **heterosexual immorality**. Just as it did in Rome in 56 AD, Berlin in the 1900’s, and the USA in 1940’s ...
- Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Romans 1:24-25)*
 - Given over to DISHONOR**
 - Moral Dishonor (1:24)
 - Spiritual Disorientation (1:25)

I. THE TWIN SOURCES OF DISHONOR TO A PEOPLE (Rom. 1:24-25)

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Romans 1:24-25)

A. Moral Dishonor due to Heterosexual Immorality (1:24)

- Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves (Rom. 1:24)*
- Literally: “*Therefore God gave them up in their passions of their hearts to uncleanness – to their bodies to be disgraced among themselves.*”
 - “impurity” (ESV) is *akatharsia*: immorality, impurity, filth
 - “dishonoring” (ESV) is *atimazo*: to degrade, to shame, to dishonor, to treat shamefully; passive: to be disgraced or shamed.
 - words usually associated with *adultery*, and *fornication*, and *sexual impurity*.
 - the **beginning** of an escalating moral slide into self-destruction: *God gave them up ... God gave them up ... God gave them up ... (1:24, 26, 28) ... to ruin!*
 - Newman and Nida (p. 26)**

Because men are such fools, God has given them over to do the filthy things their hearts desire, and they do shameful things with each other. God has given them over is

repeated in verses 26 and 28; it describes God's judgment in abandoning men to their own sinful resources. The implication is that God has deserted them and let them go their own way. The filthy things their hearts desire is a reference to the moral and spiritual depravity of man. This depravity results in the misuse of their bodies: they do shameful things with each other.

3. **Robert H. Mounce:** *Romans: NAC; p. 80*

“God allowed sin to run its course as an act of judgement.” God's wrath mentioned in Romans 1 is not an active outpouring of divine displeasure but the removal of restraint that allows sinners to reap the just fruits of their rebellion.

4. We need to see this: God's *judgment* on America's sexual immoralities has already begun. How? God simply says, “Ok! If you want complete sexual freedom apart from the moral restraints of my Hand and my Law, so be it! Have at it! See if you like the *disgrace* it brings!”

5. **Frederic L. Godet:** *Romans; p. 107*

The word gave over does not signify that God impelled them to evil, to punish the evil which they had already committed. The holiness of God is opposed to such a sense, and to give over is not to impel. On the other hand, it is impossible to stop short at the idea of a simple permission: “God let them give themselves over to evil.” God was not purely passive in the terrible development of Gentile corruption. Wherein did His action consist: He positively withdrew His hand; He ceased to hold the boat as it was dragged by the current of the river. This is the meaning of the term used by the apostle. If it is asked how such a mode of action harmonizes with the moral perfection of God, the answer undoubtedly is, that when a man has reached a certain degree of corruption, he can only be cured by the very excess of his own corruption; it is the only means left of producing what all preceding appeals and punishments failed to effect, the salutary action of repentance.

6. This is what the Father of the Prodigal son did. He let the boy go; he removed his guarding and guiding hand; he allowed the boy to go and get his “belly full” of immoral, dishonorable, shameful living –

a) *And he said, “There was a man who had two sons. And the younger of them said to his father, ‘Father, give me the share of property that is coming to me.’ And he divided his property between them. Not many days later, the younger son gathered all he had and took a journey into a far country, and there he squandered his property in reckless living. And when he had spent everything, a severe famine arose in that country, and he began to be in need. So he went and hired himself out to one of the citizens of that country, who sent him into his fields to feed pigs. And he was longing to be fed with the pods that the pigs ate, and no one gave him anything. “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father's hired servants have more than enough bread, but I perish here with hunger! I will arise and go to my father, and I will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you. (Luke 15:11-18)*

b) **James M. Boice:** *“The judicial abandonment of the human race to the consequences of its rebellion.” (1:178)*

7. This has been the painful journey of the American culture for almost 100 years!

- a) The “flappers” and “Zoot Suits” of the *Roaring 20’s* – the first wave of teenage rebellion: Jazz music, immodest clothing, alcohol and drugs, lowering of morals esp. for females, Hollywood starlettes dress immodestly, and portraying immoral lives, as heroines.
 - b) World War II: The generation of quick marriages and a swelling tide of divorces. Church attendance dropped. Money became king and marriage became “expendable goods.” Fornication began to feel “common.” The “Golden Age of Hollywood” – multiple marriages.
 - c) The “Soaring Sixties”: Soaring with the *sexual revolution, feminism, drug-culture*. From Hippies to Hollywood it was all about “free love” (i.e., unchecked fornication). Common Law marriages began to be common-place and acceptable. The Baby Boomers set a world record for divorce.
 - d) 1973: The one, immediate and dire consequence for fornication was removed: *Pregnancies out of wedlock (or in marriage) could be now legally terminated in “abortion on demand”*
 - (1) *The American Birth Control League* changed its name in 1942 to *Planned Parenthood*.
 - (2) in 1970 they began to receive Federal Funding of tax dollars under *Title X of the Family Planning Services and Population Research Act* (Pres. Richard Nixon)
 - e) 1970’s-1980’s laws against adultery, divorce, homosexuality, and prostitution began to disappear, state by state.
 - f) Today we live in a culture awash in a sea of shame: child molestation, incest, rape, pornography (addictions), 52 million abortions, loss of virginity, premarital sex that damages marriages, adultery, AIDS, STD’s, troubled and disgraced souls and minds so polluted by lusts that only homosexuality (or worse) can now titillate the passions, with new movements to legalize incestuous marriages and polygamy.
8. It would be *comical* were it not so *shamefully sad*, and so morally frightening: few are scandalized anymore by a pregnant girl outside of marriage!
9. **John Stott** (*BST*; p. 76): “*Illicit sex degrades people’s humanness; sex in marriage as God intended it, ennobles it.*”
10. How did it come to be? What was the *source* of all this shame?

B. The Spiritual Disorientation Due to Idolatry (1:25)

- 1. Paul says: “*Our moral disgrace is a result of our spiritual disorientation*”
 - a) *because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Romans 1:25)*
 - b) cf. Romans 1:22-23 – the foolish exchange

*Claiming to be wise, they became fools, and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images resembling mortal man and birds and animals and creeping things.
(Romans 1:22-23)*

- c) Two side-by-side and *disastrous exchanges* ...
 - (1) *exchanged the glory of the immortal God for idols. (v. 23)*
 - (2) *exchanged the truth about God for a lie (v. 25)*
- d) Turning from True Christianity to man-made religion:
 - (1) *Claiming to be wise, they became fools, (Romans 1:23)*
 - (2) *because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen.
(Romans 1:25)*

2. **Grant R. Osborne:** *Romans: IVP-NT Com.; pp. 51-52*

- a) *Not only did they exchange God's glory for idols (v. 23), but they also substituted human lies for divine truth. Truth of God does not mean the "truth about God" as proclaimed by his people; rather it is the truth that God has revealed of himself, that is, the knowledge that has come via natural revelation regarding his power and deity. Instead, they have chosen a lie, which Paul defines as having worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator. The two verbs probably imply pagan cultic worship in idolatrous temples. Idols were lies in the sense that false gods were given creaturely form as statues, and people believed they represented living gods. To choose the creature over the Creator is the essence of idolatry.*
- b) And pagan worship, Roman, Greek and "Barbarian," was always intensely immoral.
- c) orgies, temple prostitution, human sacrifice, and base acts of sexual perversion too offensive to mention.
- d) **Robert Mounce:** *"To turn from God is to head straight for theological and moral bankruptcy" (NAC; p. 81)*

3. Why? Because human beings are made in the *image of God* ...

- a) *Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness. And let them have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over the livestock and over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth."
So God created man in his own image,
in the image of God he created him;
male and female he created them.
And God blessed them. And God said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth." (Gen. 1:26-28)*
- b) Honor God and you'll honor yourself and other human beings.

- c) Downgrade and dishonor God and you'll dishonor yourself and abuse others for your own pleasure.
 - d) **Immorality always rises where Christianity is fading.**
4. When the GI's came home from a shattered Europe, and a defeated Pacific, having seen humanity's murder of 58 million people, their wounded souls, crushed spirits, and hardened hearts – PTSD – allowed them to turn away from God (and Christ) and to lead immoral lives!
5. We must see this: *All sexual sins have spiritual roots!*
- a) What we do with our bodies is determined by our souls
 - b) How we see God determines how we see ourselves as the *image of God* – exalted God, noble humanity ...
 - c) If we exchange the Truth of God for “*a lie*” we will debase ourselves.
 - d) We become like the idols we make because these false gods are always made in *our image because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Romans 1:25)*
 - e) Pagan gods, pagan self-image, pagan living, pagan morals ...
 - f) and the pagan treatment of others.
6. Evolutionary Biology and Evolutionary Psychology tell us that we are merely a package of instincts determined by an evolved DNA that is both amoral and survival-driven. *Survival of the fittest through Natural Selection.*
- a) One Problem: How do you then define Immorality. Answer: You don't; who said fornication was “immoral”? Or adultery?
 - b) These things are “*natural*,” instinctual, can't be helped or stopped.
 - c) Really? Then what about **Rape**? How do we define that?
 - d) In 2000, *MIT Press* published a study titled *A Natural History of Rape: Biological Bases of Sexual Coercion*.
 - e) **Randy Thornhill** and **Craig T. Palmer** actually concluded, in that book, that rape was “evolutionary” (*Acts and Facts; vol. 46; No. 2; February 2017; pp. 18-19*)
 - (1) *We argue that a desire for sexual stimulation, not a desire to produce offspring, is a proximate cause of raping and is the common denominator across human rapes of all kinds. Men's sexual ardor is, in ultimate terms, a product of past selection pressure that favored it because it increased sexual access to many females of reproductive age ... Women are evolved to choose mates carefully... Rape is one of the many behaviors that result from this evolved difference in male and female sexuality.*
 - f) **Sharon Begley** rightfully lampoons this idea: “*Can We Blame Our Bad Behavior on Stone Age Genes?*” (*Newsweek; 6-19-09*)

And that is why we carry rape genes today. The family trees of prehistoric men lacking rape genes petered out. Men attracted to young, curvaceous babes were fitter because

such women were the most fertile; mating with dumpy, barren hags is not a good way to grow a big family.”

7. Do you see? It’s all *a Lie*: Excusing our immoral desires and dishonorable behavior by denying God, buying into Evolution and ignoring our moral nature with its moral demands upon our souls and bodies!

Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. (Romans 1:24-25)

Conclusion: What do we do with all this? Where do we begin to correct the moral disorder of our times?

1. I suggest that we start with **Five Basic Christian Observations**, made by well known Christian preachers ...
2. **First:** *An observation about the moral order of God’s universe.*
 - a) The good Creator God has built a moral order into the very structure of the universe.
 - (1) Note that word: *uni-verse*
 - (2) i.e., one verse; united verse; one united voice that speaks about and speaks for the Creator.
 - (3) *For what can be known about God is plain to them, because God has shown it to them. For his invisible attributes, namely, his eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly perceived, ever since the creation of the world, in the things that have been made. So they are without excuse. (Romans 1:19-20)*
 - b) When we violate the *moral laws* of God’s universe we pay the dire consequences of such transgression:
 - (1) We step out of a 20-story window and fall to our death: *The Law of Gravity takes effect.*
 - (2) If a child disobeys his parents and runs out into the street as a truck approaches, the child will die. *Newton’s three Laws of Motion take effect.*
 - (3) If I violate the moral boundaries of marriage, all sorts of physical, psychological, social and spiritual sorrows will result. *The 7th Law of the Ten Commandments takes effect ...*

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord. (Romans 6:23)
 - c) **James M. Boice** reminded us that our sexual immorality led us be “*adrift in God’s universe*” (*Romans: 1:179*)

The universe with all its laws, physical and moral, is a given – because God is a given. Since God can never be other than he is, the universe will always be as it is. And this means that when you and I rebel against God, we must by the very nature of the case do it on God’s terms and according to God’s laws rather than our own. When we run away from God we think our way will be uphill, because we want it to be so. But the way is actually down hill. We are pulled down by the law of moral gravity – when God lets go.

- d) *Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves (Romans 1:24)*

For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; (Romans 1:26)

And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done. (Romans 1:28)

3. **Second:** *An observation about the holiness of God*

- a) God cannot and God will not tolerate rebellion against the moral order of His universe. He will act against sin, and this reaction is called “wrath”
- b) *For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who by their unrighteousness suppress the truth. (Romans 1:18)*
- c) Into every action – good or bad – is built a reaction.
- (1) Good works bring the blessing of God
 - (2) Bad deeds result in the *wrath of God*
 - (3) *God will not be ignored by mankind.*

- d) **Dr. D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones:** *Romans: 1:392*

The world as it is today is the greatest proof possible of ‘the wrath of God against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men that hold (down) the truth in unrighteousness’. Our world today, with its baffling moral problems, with its incredible moral muddle, with all the loudness and the ugliness and the foulness on the increase, is just an absolute proof of what the Apostle says here. It is God’s wrath against sin; you cannot explain it in any other way. There is no other explanation. We have been taught that education and culture and moral lectures and moral societies are going to make man moral. But they are not doing it and they cannot do it. No, no! this is a part of the ‘wrath of God against sin’. So the modern world itself proves that the doctrine which it hates above every doctrine, the doctrine of the wrath of God, is actually a fact; and when the wrath of God manifests itself in this way, and when God withdraws His restraining grace and abandons man to himself, the result is what you see.

- e) We may indeed *deny* the doctrine of the wrath of God, but we truly cannot *avoid* the reality of the wrath of God.
- f) **Karl Barth**, in no way a conservative evangelical, wrote about Romans 1:18 and the wrath of God: *“The judgement under which we stand is a fact, quite apart from our attitude to it. Indeed, it is the fact most characteristic of our life!” (Romans; p. 42)*
- g) God is God, God is good, and God punishes sin. We can’t have God without the *wrath of God*.

4. **Third:** *An observation about Hell.*

- a) The moral disorder and pain of our godless culture is but a foretaste of the horror Jesus calls “hell.”

- b) An existence where three things are true, daily, for eternity.
- (1) God is not there; He has *given us up* to our own sins without the intervention of His restraining grace.
 - (2) We seek to satisfy our carnal lusts, only to be denied any satisfaction for our sins.
 - (3) Everyone is out for themselves, using and abusing one another in an angry, frustrated, orgy of unfulfilled desires!
- c) **Greek Myth of Tantalus**, the son of Zeus.
- (1) from where we get our word “*tantalizing*”
 - (2) The King of Sipylus, who dined with the gods but broke the moral laws of conduct for human society,
 - (3) Zeus made him stand in a pool of water over which hung a fruit-laden tree ... forever!
 - (i) whenever he stooped to drink, the water receded.
 - (ii) whenever he reached for the fruit, the branches are drawn back out of reach.
 - (iii) his “hell” is “tantalized” forever by food and drink he could never have!
- d) **Donald Grey Barnhouse: Romans: 1:275**
- Sometimes people ask me if I believe in a literal Hell. I answer, of course, that the Lord Jesus Christ taught that there was a literal Hell. We can be absolutely sure that the doom of the impenitent is to remain forever as Tantalus who was condemned to stand before the water that ebbed when he stooped to drink and beneath the fruit trees whose boughs were ever blown out of his grasp as he reached to satisfy his desire. For those out of Christ, eternity will be desire without fulfillment, craving without satisfaction, longing without attainment, and lust without accomplishment. Man turned away from God and plunged toward himself. Grace pursued him, grace called to him, grace pleaded with him, grace died for him. But the man continued to lunge away from the Creator, and finally the Creator relinquished His grasp and the man fell into the bottomless pit of his own horrible being, there to remain, ingrown and inbred, forever.*
- e) Sex without spiritual fulfillment; shame instead of glory; guilt in place of reward; bondage to sin but never true freedom!
- f) This is hell: *Exchanging God for creaturely lusts, and living forever to regret it, never satisfied, always hungry for more!*

5. **Fourth:** *An observation about the Love of God*

- a) Romans 1 is not the last word. Romans 16:25-27 is the *last word!*

Now to him who is able to strengthen you according to my gospel and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery that was kept secret for long ages but has now been disclosed and through the prophetic writings has been made known

to all nations, according to the command of the eternal God, to bring about the obedience of faith— to the only wise God be glory forevermore through Jesus Christ! Amen.
(Romans 16:25-27)

- b) Thank God for Romans 1:16!

For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. (Romans 1:16)

- c) God “gave them up” occurs three times in Romans 1:24, 26, and 28. But that’s not the last word. Listen to God speak to Hosea!

*How can I give you up, O Ephraim?
How can I hand you over, O Israel?
How can I make you like Admah?
How can I treat you like Zeboiim?
My heart recoils within me;
my compassion grows warm and tender.
I will not execute my burning anger;
I will not again destroy Ephraim;
for I am God and not a man,
the Holy One in your midst,
and I will not come in wrath. (Hosea 11:8-9)*

- d) In His wrath God remembers mercy.

*O Lord, I have heard the report of you,
and your work, O Lord, do I fear.
In the midst of the years revive it;
in the midst of the years make it known;
in wrath remember mercy. (Habakkuk 3:2)*

For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment. (James 2:13)

- e) Down into this mass of immoral humanity God sends his Holy, pure, righteous and loving Son, Jesus Christ, to save us from the wrath of God!

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but in order that the world might be saved through him. (John 3:16-17)

For Christ also suffered once for sins, the righteous for the unrighteous, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive in the spirit, (1 Peter 3:18)

My little children, I am writing these things to you so that you may not sin. But if anyone does sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. He is the propitiation for our sins, and not for ours only but also for the sins of the whole world. (1 John 2:1-2)

- f) Jesus has come to save us from ourselves, our immorality and the wrath of God.

- g) All we need to do is to forsake our sexual sins and turn to Jesus Christ in faith and surrender –

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God. Working together with him, then, we appeal to you not to receive the grace of God in vain. For he says,

*“In a favorable time I listened to you,
and in a day of salvation I have helped you.”*

Behold, now is the favorable time; behold, now is the day of salvation. (2 Cor. 5:21-6:2)

- h) **Salvation from sin in Jesus Christ** – this is God’s final word! This is how the Bible ends!

He who testifies to these things says, “Surely I am coming soon.” Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all. Amen. (Rev. 22:20-21)

6. **Fifth:** *A final observation about ourselves: Romans 1 calls us to humility.*

- a) There is no reason for either pride on the part of Christians or despair on the part of immoral men not yet saved.
- b) Christ has paid for the sexual sins of **all** of us – without one ... single ... individual exception!
- c) *Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:9-11)*
- d) **Please catch that last verse:** *“And such were some of you ...”*

(1) *And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God. (1 Cor. 6:11)*

(2) Fornicators, Adulterers, Homosexuals, lustful, incestuous, rapists and worse!

(3) **“But”** ... Oh, what a marvelous little word!

(i) *washed:* cleansed from the *uncleanness* of sexual sins

(ii) *sanctified:* made holy from the dishonor of lusts

(iii) *justified:* freed from the guilt and wrath of God.

(4) *“in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God”*

7. I told you last week that I was an *evil* man who was saved. It’s true. Now I tell you this: *I was an immoral man* who has been washed, sanctified and justified.
8. One evening, in Memphis on August 14, 1976, Jesus came to my apartment and asked me this question: *“Would you like to be saved from the man you have become without me? Would you like me to cleanse you from filth? Take away your shame? Make you a new man with a new heart?”* I answered Him, *“I would.”*
9. I stand before you today, a man who is **clean**. I am no longer Mike Ross the immoral man. I am Mike Ross, the son of God.

10. Tell me? *What would you like Jesus to do for you ... today?*