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Sermon Notes

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Handed Over By God: Sexual Perversion As Judgment

Romans 1:24-28

I. Review

A. The Gospel of God: Supernatural Power for Complete Salvation

B. Righteousness of God: Both Our Greatest Problem AND Our Only Salvation

C. LAST WEEK: The Gift of God's Righteousness Absolutely Required

Why? "The first dark exchange..." The glory of God for something created (IDOLATRY)

D. Today: The Wrath of God Is Being Revealed NOW... sexual perversion as a form of God's judgment for this first dark exchange

E. Amazing Relevance:

1. John Rucker's comments about gays with AIDS... nationwide outcry of intolerance shows that the real shame in America now is intolerance, not sexual perversion
2. Supreme Court dealing with James Dale, Boy Scout Assistant Scoutmaster... New Jersey Supreme Court ruled that the Boy Scouts had no right to evict homosexuals from leadership
3. Closer to home, in December at Springs of Hope church here in the Triangle, Tim Wilkins recently presented a strong, Biblical appeal to homosexuals, saying that Christ alone could give them hope from their sins.... Strong letters to the editor criticized both Wilkins and Springs of Hope for their intolerance
4. Constant stream of propaganda from the news media and popular situation comedies (from the show "Ellen" a number of years ago to the widespread gender confusion in almost all these popular shows)... all demonstrate that a major campaign is on to move America not just to tolerate homosexuality but to embrace it as a gift from God
5. President Clinton, in the wake of the killing of Matthew Shepherd in Laramie in 1998, has championed the Hate Crimes Prevention Act in Congress that primarily focuses on crimes

against homosexuals, making them a federal offense in a different category than other violent crimes

6. Supreme Court also dealing with cases related to same-sex marriages, and taxation and adoption issues related to the definition of “marriage”

Where Bible is silent, we must not speculate... BUT where Bible speaks, we must believe and act

But Romans 1-3 exists to convince ALL people that they are sinners in need of grace

F. My Purpose Today

1. NOT to convince you that homosexuality is evil, a perversion of God’s created order... it is
 - BUT you can believe that and still lose your soul!!
 - NO... PURPOSE: ALL SIN = EXCHANGE OF GOD’S GLORY
 - BEWARE: don’t excuse yourself from Romans 1

Romans 2:1 “You therefore have no excuse, you who pass judgment on someone else, for at whatever point you judge the other you are condemning yourself, because you who pass judgment do the same things.”

2. My purposes

- a. to clear away some of Satan’s lies about Romans 1 & homosexuality in general
- b. to understand the construction and words of the text in its context
- c. to draw out the central idea of the exchange of the glory of God as the root of all human evil
- d. to draw some conclusions from Paul’s words
- e. to give Biblical counsel: 1) to persons who may be struggling with this sin; 2) to parents; 3) to society as a whole

Clearing away Misconceptions, **Construction** of the Text, **Central** Message, **Conclusions**, **Counsel**

BALANCE: Biblical conviction AND Biblical compassion **BOTH**

1 Corinthians 6:10-11 “Do not be deceived; neither the sexually immoral, nor idolators, nor adulterers... nor homosexual offenders, nor the greedy... will inherit the Kingdom of God... And that is what some of you WERE.”

Let FBC be the place where all kinds of sinners are healed from their sins!!

II. Clearing Away False Concepts

A. Clearing Away False Teaching About Romans 1

1. Some commentators seek to find Biblical warrant for homosexuality
2. Key: cause confusion over 1 Corinthians 6 and Romans 1
3. Idea: Paul is talking about Temple Prostitution in 1 Cor. 6, and something deeper in Romans 1

Argument goes: “Paul is opposing people who are naturally heterosexual abandoning what is their natural drive to engage in homosexuality.”

Central idea: God created some people heterosexual, and some people homosexual... each should remain in their class and not reverse their true make-up

Modern support: Genetic research, “gay gene”, Psychological testing which says repressing true identity as a homosexual is damaging to your psyche

4. Textual arguments against this

- a. vs. 27 “Men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another...”... Greek word = “burning”... intensified, strongly burning, heated... intense desire

Key question: If Paul is writing against people who are naturally heterosexual simply engaging haphazardly in homosexual activity, what is this “burning?”

- b. vs. 26 “Women exchanged natural relations for that which is unnatural” PARA PHUSIN... Greek ethical literature, a stock expression for homosexuality itself, per se... not for some aberration of homosexuality;

Paul is not writing about a twisting of some good gift from God, the way advocates of homosexuality would have us believe... but against homosexuality ITSELF as contrary to nature

- c. third argument against this view of Romans 1 lies in the overall structure and flow of the text, as we shall see

B. BUT what about modern genetic research and psychological testing??

1. I used to think “GAY GENE” is impossible... it may be
2. BUT if there IS a “gay gene,” SO WHAT?
3. ALL sin from: **genetic tendencies, hormones, environment**
4. MAIN IDEA of Romans 1 & Romans 8... all sin has root in physical nature

Romans 8:20-23 “The creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice but by the will of Him who subjected it in hope that the creation will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God.”

5. Genetic basis doesn’t free us from responsibility
 - genetic-based aggressive tendencies may breed violent, criminal attacks, but society doesn’t condone it or embrace it
 - genetic-based lethargic tendencies may breed laziness and poor-workmanship, but we don’t condone it or embrace it
 - genetic-based tendencies toward alcoholic excesses may lead to constant drunkenness, but we don’t condone it or embrace it
 - genetic-based gloom and depression may lead to suicidal tendencies, but we don’t condone it or embrace it
6. psychological testing... “repressing ‘true’ homosexual nature” causes psychological damage... **WHAT A LIE**... resisting the truth of God is what causes damage!!

Genesis 1 says we’re created in His image, Romans 1 tells us what happened to bring us so low from that lofty creation

III. Construction of the Text: Biblical Exposition of Romans 1:23-28

A. Triple Statement of Three-Step Sequence

Step 1: Human beings exchange the glory of God for what He's made... we prefer the creature to the Creator

Step 2: God gives us over to what we prefer

Step 3: We act out externally & bodily in our sexual relations a dramatization of what's happened to us spiritually

The Dark Exchange, God Hands Us Over, We Act It Out

B. Sequence #1: vs. 23-24

Step 1: The Dark Exchange

vs. 23 *"... they exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images..."*

Step 2: God Hands Us Over

vs. 24 *"Therefore, God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts..."*

- "God gave them over..." JUDGMENT... WRATH
- "You may drown in whatever swamp you choose..."

[Days of Noah] Genesis 6:3 *"My Spirit will not contend with man forever..."*

- IMAGE: boat straining from dock... God gives it a shove!
- BUT... for a child of God, He will **NEVER GIVE YOU OVER**

Hebrews 12:6 *"The Lord disciplines those He loves and He punishes everyone He accepts as a son..."*

Step 3: We Act It Out

vs. 24 *"... to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another."*

C. Sequence #2: vs. 25-27

Step 1: The Dark Exchange

vs. 25 *"They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshipped and served created things more than the Creator who is forever praised. Amen."*

Step 2: God Hands Us Over

vs. 26 *“Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts.”*

Step 3: We Act It Out

vs. 26-27 *“Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lusts for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion.”*

D. Sequence #3: vs. 28

Step 1: The Dark Exchange

vs. 28 *“They did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God...”*

- Literally: “They did not approve of having the knowledge of God within them”
- The knowledge of God within them meant NOTHING to them
- God was like dirt to them

Step 2: God Hands Us Over

vs. 28 *“He gave them over to a depraved mind...”*

- Literally: “A mind that cannot approve what is right...” it delights in evil
- Worthless...
- The mind was meant to appraise the worth of God... if it thinks of God as worthless, then the mind itself will become worthless

Step 3: We Act It Out

vs. 28 *“to do what ought not to be done.”*

E. Summary of structure: Three cycles of the three-step sequence

Step 1: The Dark Exchange

- the Glory of God for images of the creature
- the Truth of God for a lie

- the Knowledge of God for worthlessness

Step 2: God Hands Us Over

- to sinful desires
- to shameful lusts
- to a depraved, worthless mind

Step 3: We Act It Out

- sexual impurity and degrading of our bodies with each other
- natural relations with opposite sex abandoned for unnatural, perverted ones
- doing what ought not to be done

IV. Central Message

Hebrew word for glory is “Kabod”... related to Hebrew word meaning “to be heavy, weighty, massive”

The sun weighs 330, 000 times the earth... its gravitational force keeps all nine planets revolving in their proper orbits... the sun is heavy, weighty, massive... and glorious; a picture of the proper relationship of the glory of God to our passions

Glory of God = sun, massive center; passions are satellites... when massive center is removed, satellites fly out of order... total chaos!!

This passage is not primarily about homosexuality, but about passions flying out of order when their proper—the glory of God—is removed.

V. Conclusions

1. Three Great Reversals of the Gospel... THROUGH THE CROSS OF CHRIST!!!

- Glory of God back at the center of your heart
- Handed over to Gospel doctrine to train you the rest of your life

Romans 6:17 “Thanks be to God that, though you used to be slaves to sin, you wholeheartedly obeyed the form of teaching to which YOU WERE ENTRUSTED.”

- Acting out righteousness in the obedience of faith
2. Sexual disordering of our lives is JUDGMENT from God
 - a. NOT JUST that which deserves the judgment of God, but it IS judgment from God
 - b. “Is AIDS the judgment of God on homosexuals?”
 - Problem #1: not everyone with AIDS is a homosexual
 - Problem #2: Not every homosexual gets AIDS
 - c. AIDS IS a judgment from God on human race, but so is Alzheimer’s Disease, cataracts, heart attacks, and death itself
 - d. even more devastating is the idea that the sins we struggle with, including adultery, pornography, homosexuality are THEMSELVES judgments from God
 3. If this is a general discussion of centrality of God’s glory, why does he focus on homosexuality?
 - a. gender a gift from God... maleness and femaleness were given at creation
 - b. Satan HATES the image of God, attacks gender vigorously

Illus. National Organization of Women has as an openly stated goal: **“To work for an end to ALL distinctions based on sex.”** They definitely include sexual relations in this... males and females do not bring anything unique to parenting, so single women, two women together, two men together etc. can successfully parent a child

The church is increasingly buying into the idea that God intended NOTHING whatsoever significant in the creation of male and female

- c. Ephesians 5:31-32 show how covenant sexual unity was supposed to picture covenant worship to the true God

Ephesians 5:31-32 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery, but I am talking about Christ and the church.”

- d. homosexuality is the ultimate expression of self-worship... exchanging God’s purposes for worship of someone like ME

4. True healing is only possible through faith in Christ... only through Christ can the glory of God take its proper and central place back in our souls

VI. Biblical Counsel

1. To individuals who may be struggling with homosexuality
 - a. acknowledge yourself not as “a homosexual” but as a PERSON created in the image of God
 - b. acknowledge also that a disordered sexuality is like all other disorders, the effects of sin in the world, and does not define your personhood
 - c. trust in Christ alone, accept His gift of perfect righteousness (Romans 1:17), and full forgiveness from all sins, including homosexuality
 - d. put God’s glory back at the center of your passions... derive all joy from God Himself
 - e. determine to be holy by the power of the Spirit
 - f. seek wholesome friendships with both sexes, especially in groups

Piper: calls on families to have singles over for meals, so that the example of a godly family life can be set in their minds

2. To parents
 - a. the pain of wayward children probably greater than that for dead children... give your feeling of guilt to God
 - b. confess sins to your children... seek their forgiveness
 - c. embrace, love sinning children: don’t reject them because of your prideful embarrassment
 - d. Parents of young children: foster strong gender identities
3. Concerning our troubled society

Piper quote:

- Problem: how to live in a pluralistic culture without letting sin destroy us
- NO EASY ANSWERS! Church must pray fervently for God’s wisdom to be salt and light
- Constant attack on Biblical model of family will produce a terrible harvest in the future
- We must continue to be courageous and speak where the Bible has spoken

- REMEMBER: we are every bit as much in need of God's grace as anyone else

Piper: "God has not called us to win elections, but to win souls and hearts and minds; he has not called us to control Congress, but to preach the gospel; he has not called us to be safe, but to tell the truth. He has not called us to avoid conflict, but to love everyone."