

# Third Stage of Abandonment

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[ 0 : 0 0 ] All right, let's take out our Bibles. Romans chapter 1, please. Romans chapter 1. If you are new or joining us for the first time, welcome to our study in Romans.

We are making our way through the book of Romans as fast as we can in a very expository fashion. What that means is we want to expose ourselves to the ideas, the words that God has written that has put on Paul's heart to write so that we might know it and apply it to our lives.

We're in the final section, verses 28-32 of chapter 1. We are going to be covering the third stage of abandonment as laid out by the Apostle Paul.

I think you would all agree with me that we thank God for the blessing of salvation outlined in verses 16 and 17 that we studied otherwise.

Paul's explanation of society would almost leave us broken and feeling hopeless. Romans 1, 18-32, or sorry, 28-32, one author states, is a stirring portrait of humanity in rebellion against the Creator.

[ 1 : 1 6 ] For us, we read this book, which was written over 2,000 years ago, rings so true today that it's easy to be overwhelmed with the severity of God's response to human sinfulness.

The challenge for us as a church is how are we to respond to a culture that seems so adamant to follow every fad which strikes its fancy?

How are we as believers in Christ, as a church, to live out the truth of the gospel in a culture that doesn't even believe in truth? How do we connect with a culture that considers tolerance to be the greatest virtue and to disagree is considered a hate act?

Paul repeats, as we know, three different times, God gave them over to a culture that continues to seek new ways to deny God and to forge its own way into destruction.

One author comments, God gave them over. The scripture repeatedly declares to a plethora of destructive desires and deceptions, a veritable catalog of vice that marks not just a falling away from God, but a sprint to spiritual anarchy.

[ 2 : 5 1 ] The text reveals a humanity, having rejected the truth of God, spirals into chaos and degradation. Let's be honest, it's heavy.

It's not just a downward slide, but it's a little relinquishing. It's God simply letting us go. God allowing humanity to encounter the full implications of what it is to have life without him.

It's sobering. And it reveals at the same time the depth of human depravity and the seriousness with which God approaches our sin.

If I have a prayer for you today, my prayer is that as we would dive into this text, I invite you to consider the weight of what it means to live in a society that is perhaps, more than any other, marked by the very characteristic that God gave them up.

What does it mean for us as a church? And how do we respond to a culture and a moral freefall? How do we live as lights in such an overwhelming darkness?

[ 4 : 14 ] Those are some of the questions that I hope to answer for us this morning. As my goal is, as it has been the last two sermons, is I want you to understand the text.

I want you to understand the significance of the words that Paul is speaking to us. And I want us, as I've stated a few times here in my introduction, how are we to respond to a society that is under God's judgment?

I can think of no better time to pray. Dear Lord, we ask that you would make these words clear. We pray that you would open our hearts to an understanding of your word to apply it with, Father, I pray we come out of here full of hope, full of an understanding how to engage this culture, how to pray for our loved ones, how to even pray for the people that we do not know that are in life of destruction, O God.

We ask these things in your most holy and precious name. Amen. So beginning in verse 28, Paul just simply says, 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.

They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness.

[ 5 : 47 ] They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.

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.

This passage is considered Paul's longest vice list. If you're familiar with the Apostle Paul through some of the epistles, he gives these lists several times.

We find it in 1 and 2 Corinthians, 1 and 2 Timothy, Galatians, Colossians, Ephesians. And what he's doing is he's kind of given these lists. And every list is not an exhaustive list, but there's certain characteristics of these lists that we learn from.

One, these are characteristics that disrupt the community. If you are to live with these ways, you will destroy the community in which you live in.

[ 6 : 54 ] In several of the passages, we read these lists with a list of virtues. These are the lists of the things that ought to be lived in rather than the things we ought not to be done.

Not every list has all, but there is Paul, we count 42 different vices that Paul names in all of the lists. And if you have done any counseling with me, I often refer to Galatians 5.

Galatians 5 is pretty great because it gives you a question. It's almost a test. And when we look at the vice and virtues list, I don't really believe we see these as actions that we are to do.

I believe we see these as tests to see if we truly are in the Spirit. Galatians 5 lists certain things that we, and it's easy to say, Paul says, these are the ones that we do in the flesh.

And then there's the list of things we do in the Spirit. So it's not a yoke or burden of legalism that Paul puts over us, but it's the simple questions we can ask.

[ 8 : 01 ] How am I living? Am I living in the flesh or in the Spirit? In this text, there's two phrases that I want us to understand. Notice the phrase, did not see fit.

Another way of saying it is, did not find it worthwhile. Did not think it is important.

What Paul is talking about is that society has concluded that God is not necessary. That, and because of that, mankind makes a deliberate choice to ignore God.

That God has been clearly revealed. That he's not hidden. He's not arguing that we can't see or deduce him. He's saying that, as we know from the text, that God has been pouring himself out in creation and how we live, all these things, and making himself clear.

Yet mankind does not see fit, worthwhile, worthwhile, or important to worship him.

[ 9 : 16 ] Even worse, mankind just simply chooses to ignore God. We have this word, this phrase, debased mind.

It can also be translated as depraved or reprobate. It means a mind that is worthless, corrupted, useless, uselessly, or unfit.

And what Paul is getting at here is the mind has been so infected by their pursuit of godlessness that sin just simply blinds them.

That they even get to a point that they can't even choose to consider God. That God gave them over to a mind that no longer functions properly when it comes to determining what is right or wrong.

It is a fleshly mind. It is a carnal mind. It is an anti-God mind. It is a mind that does not have a problem with abortion.

[ 10 : 22 ] It is a mind that does not have a problem with euthanasia. It is a mind that does not have a problem with a 12-year-old wanting to transition to the other sex and then rendering them sterile for the rest of their lives.

It is a mind who thinks those are right things to do. Even when you confront them that those who have transitioned, suicide rates increase by 50%, it does not matter.

They do not care. Because it is a mind that is bent on the rejection of God. And it can only see through the eyes that are tainted with sin.

This passage is part of a specific wrath against the Gentiles who chose to ignore God. It is a wrath where God abandons us to ourselves, to what we choose.

If life that is lived believing that this is all an accident, that it's just evolution, that it was some accident that brought life to be, then why does it matter?

[ 11 : 36 ] What is our purpose? It's a lie that society continues to pursue all because it wants to escape responsibility to the Creator.

It is a lie that says God is dead. Thus, everything is permitted. Today, our culture provides all the evidence of what a debased, depraved, reprobate mind is probably more so than at any other time.

And the core of the attack begins that saying that as we know from scriptures that God is truth, Jesus is truth personified, the world's response is God is dead, there is no truth.

Make up your own truth. You are your own truth. You don't need to be a genius to think about that for a couple of minutes to know what a disaster that is going to be.

Could there be a more direct attack on the character of God himself than to say there is no truth? It's when we see that mankind is so captivated by an ideology that they literally sacrifice children at the altar of this ideology.

[ 13 : 13 ] you don't have to search the news full of these examples and you don't need to put on a tinfoil hat to agree with me but even all this climate crisis that we live in if you paid any attention to the solutions they offer destroy farmlands kill cows because they fart I'm not joking these are some of the suggestions that they believe that if we kill these carbons we'll save the world but we will kill people if you've done any research on energy and how we need energy we're creating an energy poor system what does this do to third world countries kills them it's demonstrating an elite understanding of the world where only they matter and all the not so developed worlds can pretty much go to hell that's the attitude this world is no friend to

Africa in some of the Asian countries in some of the South American countries it is clearly of Satan see it's a debased mind that feeds drug addiction through free drugs and offers no hope to escape from their enslavement it is a debased mind that sees made as the proper response to depression poverty and any hardship of life and if you've been pay attention to the news now autism a debased mind always leads to death if you remember on February 11th I preached a sermon entitled where in the world are we and I explained a book by Carl Truman who does a marvelous but overly wordly way to tell us that we're messed but we've gotten to a point in our lives as people and

I want you to think about this we are now told that our sexual desires make our identity and that's why it's very hard to talk about these issues of the day if just think about that that you've simply been reduced to a sexual desire you know what you can do to that person you can market them whatever they want but that destroys our culture destroys our art it destroys our purpose it destroys everything that God has created us to be to think that we are to be enslaved by our sexual preference there's a sad story two women get married they begin with an understanding that their preferences are rooted in same sex attraction that this sex is hard wired however one of them transitions into a man the full bore transition into the man and now they divorce and the case is why why the divorce the other person is asking and the one partner is saying well

I'm attracted to women it's the way I've been hardwired and the other one saying well I'm fluid I'm different now and I don't want you to misunderstand me I'm not giving you this situation to mock or to laugh at but we're seeing how these two competing ideas come together both can't be true and yet they're trying to bring this into a world that is absolutely destroying people like these people are now grievously harmed these are examples of a debased mind that rejects God as God and therefore rejects true truth and attempts to live the lie and the results are a disaster as I said these are real people who are experiencing real pain and they are truly struggling to find purpose outside of

God the wars truly aren't between nations anymore but it's a war that exists between truth and lies it is sad it is tragic and these are real people who have real lives and are sadly facing real consequences for their decisions think about those two young ladies and how do they go on living life as a fruitful human being in society destroys them verse 28 says 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 how many times do we use that word ought it's kind of an old fashioned word right but we've used it right it's we ought not to do these things it's a built in understanding that mankind knows that there's a standard of politeness of adhering with one another that we ought to do you know when your kids visiting somewhere and they put their feet on the couch you tell them you ought not to put your feet on the couch you ought not to walk around with your muddy shoes through the house

[19:24] I hear that a lot at my house in regards to me like I'm supposed to know better which I am I am honey I really am I know so for this vice list I'm not going to go over every single one of the vices that Paul mentions but I'm simply going to read for you Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of this passage from the message I think this pretty much provides any needed commentary that we need to understand that Paul is saying here he says since they didn't bother to acknowledge God God quit bothering them and let them run loose and then all hell broke loose rampant evil grabbing and grasping vicious backstabbing they made life hell on earth with their envy wanton killing bickering and cheating look at them mean spirited venomous forked tongue

God bashers bullies swaggerers insufferable windbags they keep inventing new ways of wrecking lives they ditch their parents when they get in the way they're stupid slimy cruel and cold blooded you see when a culture eliminates gods all the standards disappear society crumbles society is no longer a safe place when people do things that ought not to be done it's ironic just in this last couple of weeks social media has been actually full of different people commenting on these issues today are any of you guys familiar with Bill Maher Bill Maher runs a comedy political discussion he is an atheist he is certainly a narcissist egotist but he simply asked the question are we not supposed to be protecting children not enslaving them and using them for our own benefit like you know when a guy who is visibly and he's kind of a funny character because he tries to say that he hates

God but at the same time there's a respect for Christianity that he has that he understands there's got to be a God and if there is he hopes it's that one Joe Rogan again had another interview where they're now trying to push back the only problem is the only ways they know how to do is to push back with fleshly means rather than spiritual means but I thank God for them I thank God that God has given them some type of clarity that they recognize there is wrong and there is evil today but when we consider this passage I believe the worst is found in verse 32 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 Peterson states it's not as if they don't know better they know perfectly well they're spitting in

God's face and they don't care worse they hand out prizes to those who do the worst of things it is remarkable in that despite their rejection of God they are still aware of God's disapproval there is some debate on this last verse of what is worse is it actually committing the sin the evil deed or enticing others to do them both Jesus Christ gives us some wisdom in this in Matthew 18 he writes whoever receives one such child in my name receives me but whoever caused one of these little ones who believe in me to sin it would be better for him to have a great millstone fastened around his neck and to be drowned in the depths of the sea for those people who think that

Jesus said only nice things see there is something easy about doing our own sin and our own darkness and not including someone else but there's something serious about bringing someone else into our own sin into our own rebelliousness and causing them to rebel as well that makes me think that heeding Jesus' words are somehow important to pay attention to if others are doing it if I can get them to join then I will be okay now my goal is not to depress you so I'm going to give you some concluding thoughts that I pray that will have an impact on your life and four things that I want you to think about going forward first question that I want you to ask is where does this leave us with

[ 25 : 09 ] God where does this leave us with God the reality is we don't brush it off as just a description of there are bad people out there the goal for us in reading this text is to say no we take this seriously notice in verse 32 Paul stark reminder of the justice of God it says those who practice such things deserve to die this statement underscores the just penalty of sin which is death God's decree is not arbitrary but is anchored in his perfect righteousness righteousness in the context of Paul's argument this justice serves not only as a basis for God's condemnation of sin but also magnifies the necessity of atonement through

Jesus Christ God's justice necessitates that sin not go unpunished but yet his love provides the means of redemption through Jesus Christ amen see the greatest thing the greatest weapon we have at our disposal when we are talking to our friends and family that are lost or depths of sin is they know the ought they know the ought they know what ought not to be done God has wired them that way that is how they've been created they know they are a pale comparison to who we were supposed to be created Adam and Eve who walked in the cool of the day with God perfect peace perfect relationship that's still wired in us that tells us no matter how lost someone is there is still hope that hope isn't built up in them but it's found at the cross of

Jesus Christ where God's perfect justice perfectly meets his love so God does not leave them hanging amen we don't despair we pray secondly when we consider these texts we need God we need to ask God to examine us in Romans 1 32 Paul emphasizes that those who practice sin are not only deserving of death but also approve of those who practice the same things this is a sobering reminder that our actions have consequences not only for ourselves but for those around us our wives our husbands our children when we make a choice it affects others as well when we condone and participate in sin we are complicit in perpetuating the cycle of rebellion against God we need to ask the Holy

Spirit to reveal if there are ways in which we are suppressing the truth are there any ways that we have endorsed sin or possibly is there any area that we've been complacent in thirdly we do as Paul instructs his protege Timothy 1 Timothy 4 16 Paul writes keep a close watch on yourself and on the teaching persist in this for by doing by so doing you will save both yourself and your hearers there's two ways to do this and they are complimentary the first way you begin with prayer you ask God to reveal to you where you need to change and then you get into his word let the word read you it was interesting

I just came out of that I'm not that clever but I was reading a subject and I loved it it's not just let you read the word let the word read you let God's word examine you allow the word to test you let it expose the areas where you've gone astray and when it does don't run from it we want to right shame always comes in shame is the enemy right guilt is a good thing you know guilt's a good thing it reveals whether we're right or wrong it's not a feeling but it's letting us know have I broken God's law yes or no when we persist in that guilt Satan's going to use shame don't worry no one's going to forgive you God's not going to love you those people won't accept you anymore man Satan works so hard to make us Christians run from him my encouragement to you is to run to

[ 30 : 33 ] God with it confess it repent it you see this is how change happens this is how we as grow so like I said the first way is to start with prayer get into God's word let God's word expose who you are be honest with yourself and the second place second way is lean into your church if you don't attend here if you have a home church lean into your church here lean in here allow others to see you and know you what this means is you expose your hearts to trusted friends your your pastors your elders your those that love you and allow them to have a voice in your life the fact the matter is we're not meant to be alone we're meant to encourage to support to correct to love yes even in our sin that's what the church is made for

I said this a few weeks ago the church is a hospital for sinners and it's a hospital for saints I think I'll just change that it's the church is a lighthouse for sinners and a hospital for saints to do one without the other is trying to race with one leg if you go all personal devotions ignore the church you got a left leg I'm just gonna go to church and that once a week time is gonna get me that's just like running on a right leg that's just gonna get you going in circles you need two legs to run forward the reality is you need a relationship with God and the church and lastly I implore you I beg you don't stick your head in the sand it is easy to see how crazy this world is like come on they got flashing lights and flags waving in your face hey this is crazyville you know it's easy to get discouraged but I encourage you don't hide have you considered that

God has created you perfectly for such a time as this amen we're meant to be here we're not meant to be living in the 50s we're called to live in the crazy 2020s God knows you in the midst of the darkness and despair of human depravity we find hope in the promise of redemption through faith in Jesus Christ our role is to bring the message of Romans 1 16 and 17 for I am not ashamed of the gospel I glory in the gospel for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes to the Jew first and also to the Greek for in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith for faith as it is written the righteousness shall live by faith my friends this is the essence of the Christian message that in

Christ there is forgiveness of sins there is reconciliation with God and there is hope of eternal life the righteousness that comes from the faith in Jesus Christ is the only means by which we can be saved from the wrath of God and be made right with him if you've never placed your faith in Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior I urge you to do so today confess your sins turn away from your old way of life and receive the free gift of salvation that is freely offered through faith in him for those of you who are believers in Christ let us continue to walk in holiness walk in repentance walk in obedience bearing witness to the truth of the gospel in a world that we know desperately needs

God's love and grace there's ever a time that we need more people to stand firm in our faith knowing that our hope is secure in the hands of a loving and sovereign God I know of no other time more than this that it's needed let us pray dear holy heavenly father these are heavy words and I pray they have the right weight that you intend to do upon our hearts father you have indeed created us for such a time it doesn't matter if we've been believers for 50 years 10 years or four weeks it doesn't matter you are provincial over all these things from who our parents are for who their parents are we've been exposed to different sins that are sometimes unique to our lineage but they're not unique in this world we've all struggled with loneliness abandonment we've all gossiped we've all backstabbed we've all been angry

[ 36 : 36 ] I praise you and I thank you for forgiving us I praise you in giving us this word and what's amazing as we get into Romans chapter 2 Paul actually goes after the religious and he begins by stating that after reading Romans 1 it's so easy to want to judge the world these Gentiles living in Paul's time but he says hey don't judge look at you guys father I ask that you would forgive us for our religious heart forgive us for our legalism our judgmentalism forgive us for thinking that we are better there's any way to respond to this message is thank you God for opening my heart to you to see and know and understand your great love that you saved me that you have blessed me with a home of a mother and father that love me care for me with siblings that follow after you and if none of those you have given me a church and father let that be a challenge to us we understand what the church is supposed to be like and that gives us the responsibility to be as you have called us to be let this lighthouse shine brightly to a broken world let the souls who enter in be mended by the power of your word displayed through the actions of the saints who are here to love care and to mend those around us we ask you for these things oh great and heavenly God and may we never forsake your ways and all of

God's people said amen