



Group Discussion Guide

Romans 1:16-32

For groups meeting January 12 evening through January 19 morning.

This week's reading begins with the central truth of Paul's letter to believers in Rome. In verses 16-17, Paul explains that the gospel "is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes," (v. 16). This gospel – the "good news" that the Son of God came to earth, died to pay the penalty of sin and then rose again from dead – has been orchestrated by God and provides His power for the saving of all who believe in Christ. This glorious gospel first came to the Jews, and then reached the Gentile world. The gospel presents the righteousness of God in that the death of Christ satisfied the justice of God and also offered forgiveness to humanity. Paul quotes Habakkuk 2:4 in explaining that this forgiveness comes to human beings through faith and then empowers those who are saved to live by faith (v. 17). It is the power of the gospel to save that causes Paul to say, "I am not ashamed of the gospel," (v. 16), and this is demonstrated in his commitment to sharing this good news (v. 13-15).

The rest of Romans 1 is dedicated to proving the need for the gospel, as Paul begins to focus on the effects of sin upon the human race. He gives three primary reasons for "the wrath of God" upon humanity, and all three are connected. First, Paul writes that God judges people because they "suppress the truth," (v. 18) about God and man. He references that people are ungodly (they do not have reverence for God) and unrighteous (they do not do what God says). Second, he states that God judges people because they have ignored God's general revelation. He has shown them what can be known about Him through His creation (vs. 19-20). For this reason, people who ignore God have no excuse (v. 20). Finally, Paul writes that mankind has substituted the worship of the One True God for worship of images or idols (vs. 21-23). The continued rejection of God caused their hearts to be "darkened" (v. 21) and their thinking to be foolish (v. 22), resulting in the worship of images that resemble created beings (v. 23).

After giving the reasons for God's judgment of people, Paul then writes about the result of their rejection of God: "God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity," (v. 24). This was not simply God allowing nature to run its course, but rather was an active effort on the part of God to let people go. Humanity rejected God as people "exchanged the truth about God for a lie," and worshiped creation instead of the Creator (v. 25). This worldview led to both women and men making another sinful "exchange" as they traded God's design for human sexuality; women sought sexual relationships with other women and men with other men (vs. 26-27). Paul's writing in these verses makes it clear that homosexual relationships are sinful. Paul then lists other sinful results of God "giving [people] up to a debased mind," starting with four main forms of sinful behavior and then giving a more detailed list (vs. 28-31). Paul closes this section by writing that those who have rejected God live this way even though they know that doing so means they deserve death, and they approve of others choosing this sinful way of life (v. 32).

Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think Paul chose to declare that he was not ashamed of the gospel (v. 16)? Why do we need to hear this message today?
2. How is the righteousness of God revealed in the gospel (v. 17)?
3. What does Paul mean in writing that the gospel reveals the righteousness of God “from faith for faith” (v. 17)?
4. How can we see God’s “eternal power and divine nature” in His creation (v. 20)?
5. Why do you think so many people have chosen to reject the knowledge of God given through general revelation (God’s creation)?
6. Consider these sinful actions of those who have rejected God that are mentioned by Paul: suppressing truth, ignoring God’s revelation and worshiping the creation instead of the Creator. How do these affect humanity as a whole?
7. In the last 25 years, the homosexual lifestyle has become increasingly accepted in our American culture. What does Paul’s reference to this lifestyle (vs. 26-27) teach us about God’s design for human sexuality, and how he views homosexual relationships?
8. Paul writes in detail about the results of rejecting God in verses 26-32. How do we who believe stay focused on Christ in the midst of a world that seems to revolve around these types of sinful behavior?