

Explore the Bible Series for Sept. 11: Everyone needs to hear the story of God's love

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Everyone needs to hear the story of God's love

- Romans 1:18-32

By Trey Turner

Canyon Creek Baptist Church, Temple

Oswald Chambers talks about the mystery of obedience that unlocks spiritual understanding. He more than implies in his devotional lesson "The Way to Know" how a person who obeys Christ's teachings will begin to see the unfolding of understanding and spiritual wisdom in that area of life.

Without using the word Gentiles, the Apostle Paul clearly shows all people are accountable for their behavior. He notes that behaviors pour from what people believe even while God is revealing his character through universal revelation.



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Author Daniel Pipes [probes some of the underlying thoughts](#) of the July 7 London bombings. He notes a particular poll in which 526 Muslim adults in Great Britain were asked about their feelings and beliefs after the event. Pipes concludes “‘16,000 individuals declare themselves willing, possibly even eager, to embrace violence’ in the effort to bring an end to ‘decadent and immoral’ Western society.” The poll results also say:

- 24 percent of Muslims feel sympathetic for the “feelings and motives” of those who carried out the bombings.
- 56 percent understand why people behave that way.
- 26 percent disagree with Tony Blair’s description of the ideology of the London bombers as “perverted and poisonous.”
- Only 73 percent said they would inform the police if they believed they knew about the possible planning of new attacks.

The article demonstrates the relevance of these verses by showing extreme views and behaviors around us.

In every culture, people have what the author understands to be a universal sense of values. People typically are not born with a hostile view of nature, sunsets or a bent toward hatred of others. If such beliefs arise, it is because they are fostered.

Suppressing obvious truth (Romans 1:18-20)

Paul shows three things about God that generally are observed by everyone. God's invisible qualities, his eternal power and his divine nature are seen in what God has made, leaving people to respond with humble, appropriate actions. He then shows what happens when people reject what has long been recognized as general revelation.

Refusing to worship God (Romans 1:21-25)

The phrase "they knew God" indicates they had truth about him, not that they had a relationship with him as we would say that our pianist "knows God." These people who have discarded knowledge of God, his nature and his qualities have now believed a lie and filled the worship void with infatuation with created things.

When a person applies a sense of goodness to the world, people and truth while denying God and his qualities, something is spiritually skewed—values shifted. It is like having a telescope with a smudge on the lens. Paul writes how their thinking and hearts are negatively affected.

Behaving in ungodly ways (Romans 1:26-31)

Actions out of shifted values are not victimless decisions. This sin affects all of us who live in community together. Since one of God's divine qualities is love, here we see its perversion. This passage is the clearest condemnation of homosexuality in the Bible. With condemnation of the behavior, God shows the cause of it. People ignored any voice of guidance in understanding the nature and qualities of God so God allowed people the consequences of that behavior—"God gave them over."

It is not completely accurate to say that God will judge homosexual behavior; it is that he is judging a rejection of his self-revelation. Homosexuality is a sin; it also is a symptom of discarding God and his truth. Note, this is not the only sin which comes as a result of ignoring God's self-revelation.

Ignoring God's verdict (Romans 1:32)

These are not behaviors people know are wrong. Paul is describing people who are not sorry, but are promoters of bad behavior operating off of twisted values. Both of which may line up perfectly with one another—the behavior perpetuates the values and the values spawn the behaviors.

Now, behind Paul's writing is not ultimate condemnation because people cannot ultimately say when God is or is not finished with another human being. So, Paul is talking about people who need more than tolerance. Tolerance labels and keeps others at arms distance. Paul has compassion. These Gentiles are those to whom he was sent to proclaim the gospel of God—a righteousness from God by faith.

We would do well to recognize ungodly behaviors in our lives and then bring our behavior in line with God's general revelation and special revelation. When we do, we will be challenged to reach toward people who are caught up in blind and troubled behaviors.

Discussion question

- What person or group might be easy to distance from and label?
- If God is love and his children are ambassadors, to whom are we called to build a bridge and bring to Christ?

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