

The World's Dumbest Exchange | Romans 1:18-32

The Bad News | My parents always did this “good news/bad news” thing with me when I was a kid. They would be like “alright...so do you want the good news first or the bad news?” And because I was a sneaky kid I would say the good news first and then before they got to the bad news I'd run away. Like the good news was that I could go to my friends house to play so before they told me the bad news I was out the door and running like 5 block to my friends house...and apparently the bad news was that they weren't going to be home till the next day.

So yeah...I got some good news/bad news for you and I know that I'm a guest here and I really do just want to give you good news because I want you to like me and not pull any pranks on me while I sleep but because I know better I'm going to start with the bad news first if that's alright. So that's my warning so please don't get mad at me and please don't think I don't like you...all I'm doing is going to explain scripture and speak truth to ya.

So if you have your bibles lets go to Romans 1:18 and we'll start there.

The Wrath of God | For some reason when people were to talk about the “wrath of God” I had in my mind like this crazy disaster that would happen to people from an almighty vengeful God. Like someone would do something like commit rape or murder and the wrath of God would be something crazy like lightening coming from the sky and smokin' the dude to a crisp. Or the wrath of God would be like a bunch of monkeys coming out of the forest and beating sinners with rocks for all to say “whoa...don't mess with God or His wrath shall thus therefore befall upon thee.” And in some way or another, I thought that was what happened to people and I thought *that* was the wrath of God. And you know what? I believed it only happened to “sinners” – people who would talk too much in church or bullies at school who would pick on people smaller than they because they had self-esteem issues – that was whom the wrath of God was meant for.

But I want to show you this verse though because there are a couple of things in it that completely changed how I viewed everything:

It says that this wrath of God (and let me define the wrath of God as “a steady building opposition against”) is revealed (currently) to all ungodliness and unrighteousness. Why? Because in verse 19 it says that even though they know better they ignore the fact that there is a God and that He's powerful and bigger than they are. But how do they do this? They do it by using their ungodliness and unrighteousness to block out the reality that there might just be a God. And in a second we're going to see the switch between “they” and “us”.

The 1st Exchange | But how in the world do people do this? They begin to make a costly exchange. Look with me in verse 21-23 “*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.*” The first exchange I'm going to say “we” make is worshipping God's stuff rather than God himself.

This one is probably the easiest one to spot. So imagine this (your hand) is the seat of your desires and it says in Scripture that God continues to give us desires – and they're good desires. So it can be anything – money (which is good), family, food, sex (in its biblical context)...are all good things. And He gives it to his creation and says "go...enjoy these things." But what happens is that we tend to forget the One giving us the gifts and just focus on the gifts themselves. So take for example a dating relationship. I mean you meet that guy or that girl and man...they are perfect! I mean, they're funny, they're smart, they make you laugh...they "complete you." And as the relationship continues to progress you realize that it's hard to sleep if you don't talk to them on the phone just before you go to bed or if they don't text you back right away you're worried that they're mad or something. And you get extremely attached to the point where once you said "Thank you God that you have blessed me with ____" to "You can take anything in my life just don't touch this person. Because I don't know what I would do without them." And little by little you begin to close your hands around that good desire. And you start to worship the gift without worshipping the giver. And this can be anything in your life – school, your reputation, your cell phone, money, sex.

And when we say "I don't want God any more...I'll take his stuff" he responds in verse 24 by giving them over to those lusts. And the wrath of God isn't stripping away all that you hold dear...in fact, the wrath of God is that he says "if that's what you want...that's what you get." And I want you to understand what's going on. If you remember Solomon in Ecclesiastes – he gets everything he has ever wanted – money, sex, fame, education, you name it he got it. He was the baller of all ballers but he continues to warn you and I that everything here on this earth cannot and will not satisfy the human heart. These things weren't meant to. Girls and cars make for lousy gods and the more we continue to catch them...the more we frustrate ourselves. Because when and if you finally get what you want then what? Will you be satisfied? I promise you you won't because then you'll just want more. And God is going "if that's what you really want then go chase it and see if I'm a liar."

The 2nd Exchange | So what happens after you reject God and just take his stuff? Well you can't truly worship him right? So the only option is that you create your own god and your own rules. Look in verse 24-23 "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." The second blasphemy of the universe is that we begin to believe that we're smarter than God. The lie that we continue to tell ourselves is that our way for life is better, our way of religion is better. And if you really think about this...this is probably the dumbest thing in the world. "I mean I know that you are the God of the universe and all things hold together by the word of your mouth...but I got a 97 in calculus. How about you just deal with keeping the universe from exploding and I'll worry about whether or not I should confess my sins." But man...we do this all the time. Have you ever had God really challenge you? Maybe it was from a leader or something you read in scripture? Like for me one of the verses I recently had problems with (if I can even say that) is found in 1 Timothy 5:1 and it says "do not rebuke an older man but encourage him as you would a father..." And it's hard for me because I react to things and I'm pretty impulsive. Like we have these guys in our church and all they want to do is to rule over everything...I mean power hungry. And when I see this I just want to take my bible and just jack them in the throat

with it and go bam! Word of God in your throat! But scripture confronts me and goes “no! you are to love them and encourage them to live out godly lives” And every time I say no and I just react and do things the way I want to I pretty much say “Sorry God I’m not going to listen to you on this one...I’ll do it my way”.

And God responds in verse 26-27. And it’s an interesting response because if you don’t get to the root of what is going on here, you’ll think it’s solely about homosexuality but there’s something bigger. *“For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error.”* I told you it was weird. Let me explain it...in the book of Ephesians it says that one of the most obvious ways that the world could see just how much God loved us was to represent it in marriage – through this sacrificial kind of love, a love that held no bounds and surpassed what the world could ever imagine. And now the greatest perversion of this love is found here where the man says “I don’t care how God has intended marriage and love to work...forget the woman, I want myself...I want another man” and for the woman to say “forget the man, I want myself...I want another woman.” You see, it’s still this idea that we think we know what’s best and we continue to doubt God’s goodness. But time and time again God responds by giving us over to these desires and goes “if that’s what you truly want...then that’s what you’ll get.”

The 3rd Exchange | So what happens when you exchange God for his stuff and you doubt his way for your life? The next logical step is that you simply reject him all together and live as though He isn’t there (back to verses 18-20) and you do whatever it is that you want to do. And think about it because I think it makes sense. If there’s no God, then there’s no consequences right? I mean...there’s no higher power and when you die, that’s it right? So of course you can do whatever it is that you want to do...and so the bible 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 were full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. 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 decrees that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.”* They plug their ears and eyes towards righteousness...why? Because it’s easier and quicker to make your own God than to worship the real one.

The Hard Part | And here’s the hard part...if we’re to be honest, we can’t say “yeah...it’s those people out there that do this.” Because c’mon...you and I do this. You and I hold on to things and make them our gods and we always forget to acknowledge the one who gives us those gifts. And we’re the ones that constantly doubt and not follow God’s way for our lives. We do things our way because it’s easier and although we say that we want to follow him...we know that we don’t. So yeah...this verse is actually talking about us then huh? But you know the worst part about this? We know that we can’t get out of this mess on our own. I mean have you ever tried to stop sinning just to fall back into the same mess? Like you want to change but it seems like every time you take one step forward you end up taking 3 steps back. And scripture says that if God is truly holy and righteous then He can’t stand to be with

sinner like us – sinners that constantly belittle his name by worshiping his stuff rather than him, sinner like us that doubt him, never follow him, and sinners that reject him altogether. And he can't just forgive us because He is a just God. What I mean is that say a man goes to court for a horrendous crime and the judge goes "Ok...what have you done?" and the man replies "Well I've rapped and killed an innocent person" The judge looks at his record and determines that his "good works" outweigh his one act of evil and go "just promise that you won't do this again". If that happens, that judge is NOT just right? I mean...that act of evil MUST be punished. In the same way...every time we go about life and we treat God as if He's this ignorant moron in the sky scripture here tells us that he stores up wrath towards us that will one day be punished. So what am I saying? That we're all going to hell and face punishment? That's exactly what I'm saying. You see, deep down inside we know that we're guilty...and to make matters worse is that no matter how hard we try we can't ever win favor with God because we have NOTHING to offer him. So what...? Well that's the bad news...the good news I'll tell you tomorrow.