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Well, I want to welcome everyone gathered across all of our physical locations and those of you joining us online. We are super thrilled to have you with us today.

And hopefully you were able to get one of these *Recalibrate* journals last weekend. We did run out of them and we're trying to get as many back in stock as we possibly can because we want you to have one.

And I want to encourage you to bring it with you every week. Don't leave it somewhere and forget it because of just the scarcity of these. It is really important to give them away to people who want to have one.

I do want to draw your attention to the QR code inside. Scan that, because it opens up a whole bunch of additional resources to our study in Romans that you don't want to miss. Sign up for the Daily Bible Reading. I said this last week, there is no way that we're going to get through the entire content of the book of Romans in 11 weeks, but through Daily Bible Reading and the additional studies, we will. So, you're going to leave a whole bunch on the table if you don't take advantage of that.

Now, a couple of quick things before we get going. First of all, I just want to celebrate the fact that we are going to be launching our Midtown campus in January. And we're excited about that. Can we give it up for our Midtown campus?

Those of you who have been in our church for a while may recall that we had launched Northeast and our Midtown campuses right before COVID. We had to make a really painstaking decision to push pause on both of those campuses, knowing full well that in the future we would re-launch them again. We're still working on plans for Northeast, but we have a date for our Midtown campus.

We have a campus pastor for Midtown. His name is Alex Diaz, and he and his wife Erin relocated with their family here this summer. Just an incredible family. In fact I had them over to my house on Thursday night and we sat around a campfire enjoying this incredible weather that we're having. And I just love his heart. I love his heart for God. I love his heart for people. In fact, I'm going to have him preach in a couple of months so that way our entire church can get acquainted with him.

I just want to ask you to be praying for the start of this campus. We are praying for this city, and this is an important area in our city. Just be praying toward the launch of the Midtown campus in January.

One other real quick thing before we get going is that I just want to make you aware that here, in about 30ish minutes or so, there is going to be a small section of this message that might be a little bit sensitive to young ears. So, if you are a parent and you've got little kids in the room with you right now, not trying to cause any alarm, just speaking as a dad—as a father I

would like to have this heads-up. Just want to make you aware of that. And maybe here in five minutes or so you might get up, take a little potty break, and check your kids into our amazing Kids' Ministry environment. It is awesome. They will love it.

Well, last week we kicked off this series in Romans by saying that all of us have our internal compasses calibrated in different directions. And what I mean by that is that all of us have a way to perceive right and wrong, good and bad, just and unjust, and we all have an opinion or perspective on the myriad of issues that are going on in our world right now *and* we're pretty certain that our perspective is the right one.

But the thing is, is that we all have a voice or a set of voices that are informing the perspective that we have. And that's not all bad. But we need to evaluate them from time to time.

So for some of us the voice that is informing the direction of our compass may be CNN or Fox News. Maybe it's the latest book on enneagram or the Instagram influencers that you follow.

And like I said, none of that is bad, but periodically we need to stop, as followers of Jesus, and recalibrate our compass and ask ourselves, "Do those voices sound anything at all like the voice of Jesus?"

And so what we're doing in this series is we're using the book of Romans to do what it has been doing for people for centuries—recalibrate our lives back to True North, because the last year-and-a-half has knocked all of us off to some degree. And by True North, I mean this:

Following after Jesus in every area of our lives

And the fancy word for this is Lordship. And it's a very simple meaning. It simply means that I'm going to follow Jesus first and everything else is a distant second. It's the realization that what God is really after isn't my beliefs. Oftentimes we're like, "I believe in God," and it's a good place to start. But the Bible tells that even the demons believe, but they don't necessarily follow Jesus.

See, it's an understanding that until I give God my heart, it's just empty actions and empty religion. When God evaluates your life and mine, He's not looking at external conformity to a religion or even a set of beliefs, but an inward transformation of the heart by His Spirit, which then always affects the way that we live our lives.

Now, oftentimes what happens is that most of us are on board with Jesus. We like the idea of Jesus as Savior, but then there's this thing that is sort of battling against that and it's called: the way I want to live my life.

And eventually those things will come into conflict, and at some point we have a decision to make. We can choose to reject Jesus; God will allow you to do that. It's called freewill, "I'm out on that." Or maybe we use excuses to help us kind of excuse walking away. We'll say things like, "Well, I can't believe in a God who would allow pain and suffering in this world," so we think that by walking away from Him it solves it. Or we say, "You know, I don't think that I like what God has to say about this subject over here, so I'm going to choose to reject it."

Here's what is happening increasingly in our world today. We just take who Jesus is and what He says and we reshape it to fit the way that we want to live. And that is not Lordship. So this is the question that Paul is going to place the focus on in our passage today. The question is: Who or what has my heart?

And I want you to write this question down in your journal. I want you to really grapple with this question this week. And I want to urge you not to answer it too quickly, because my mouth can say one thing, but my credit card statement and internet history can say another.

So, what Paul is going to do, by way of review, is he is going to open up this letter just like we saw last week by telling all of us who he used to be before God got a hold of his heart. And who he used to be was a self-righteous, religious jerk.

But then he says in another letter to a young man named Timothy, "I'm the worst of all sinners." The grace of God completely humbled him. And he says, "If He says He can change somebody like me, then He can change anyone." This is available to everyone.

So, Paul, what he is doing is he is traveling around the Middle East on these missionary journeys and he's telling anyone and everyone about this Gospel message that has the dynamite power to save.

Now, what he's doing in Romans is he is writing a letter to an incredibly influential, yet massively divided church in Rome and he's saying, "Hey, listen. All of your compasses are calibrated in different directions because of the culture in which you live."

And he says, "It's not a bad thing to have these perspectives or traditions or backgrounds, but you need to keep the main thing the main thing." And he would say, "Hey, listen. It doesn't matter if you're Jew or Gentile, good or bad, religious, or non-religious; all of us are equally dependent upon the complete righteousness and finished work of Jesus alone." And he says, "This Gospel has power to save."

Now, from chapter 1, verse 18 to the beginning of chapter 2, what Paul is going to do is he is going painstakingly explain what it is that you and I need to be saved from. In other words, if the Good News of the Gospel doesn't really sound all that good to you, it's likely because you don't really understand just how bad the bad news really is.

Here's another way of saying it: Paul has got to get us lost before he can get us saved, which is one of the reasons why the passage we're going to look at today is really challenging. In fact, some of these verses, when we read them here in a moment—I wouldn't be surprised if there is a little bit of an emotional reaction that sort of rises up within you.

This section of Romans is not only difficult; it's become one of the most despised passages in the entire Bible. And I am going to teach it today. Don't you wish you were me? I can just feel the envy in the room and online. You guys are like, "I wish I could trade places with Aaron today."

I've been preaching for some 20 odd years, and I've just learned that some messages, man, they just get you cheered like a hero, and others, pounded like a nail.

I had a mentor a few years ago say to me, "You know, Aaron," he said, "preaching sometimes requires you to throw yourself into oncoming traffic because the wisdom of God's Word is going to run in the opposite direction of the ideologies of culture." So I just want to acknowledge that.

I want to acknowledge that I'm not getting out of this message today without disappointing someone. And I'm either going to disappoint some of you, or I'm going to disappoint God. And I just want you to know, I love you, but I'd rather disappoint you, because God has a bigger truck, alright?

Turn to the person beside you and just simply say this: “These are going to be some hard truths.” Go ahead. “I’m praying you have the humility to receive it, but by the looks of you I’m not very optimistic.”

Actually, in all seriousness, I just want you to know my heart. And if you missed last week’s message, go back and read it. I just want you to know that I stand on this platform not because I’ve got it all figured out, I stand on this platform as a fellow struggler.

And I want you to know that there are areas of my life, right now, that I need to submit to the Lordship of Christ. And there are areas that I thought I submitted to the Lordship of Christ, but I’ve got to go back and resubmit myself to the Lordship of Christ. And I just want you to know that I’m right there in the struggle with you.

Now, the reason why this is one of the most difficult passages in the Bible is because it flies in the face of the dominant ideology of our culture. Listen. We have all had our compasses calibrated to it and we continue to. Some of us since the day we were born. You don’t know anything different. And the reason why this is going to sound so alarming to you is because it’s so dramatically different from everything you hear.

However, I will say this: as Christians, we haven’t done ourselves any favors when it comes to the way in which the end of Romans, chapter 1 gets taught or communicated. Here’s what I mean: this passage was never meant to be used as binoculars, examining the lives of other people from a distance. This passage is meant to be used as a mirror to get a good look at ourselves.

Paul is going to say, “Hey, listen. The ground is level at the foot of the cross. We are all in the same boat.”

There is no such thing as a super-Christian. That person does not exist. It doesn’t matter if you listen to K Love and have a Jesus fish on the back of your car, or if you listen to ACDC and you have an evolution fish on the back of your car. Or, like me, you listen to ACDC and you have a Jesus fish on the back of your car—that will blow all of your categories, right? We all need Jesus.

What this means is there is no such thing as a major sin or a minor sin. There may be different consequences to sin, but there is no such thing as a major one and a minor one. This means that there are no good guys and bad guys. We are all bad guys. There is only one saving good guy and His name is Jesus.

So before we jump in, what I want to do... I just want you to know my heart. I want you to do surgery not be a hatchet man. I want to use a scalpel not a machete. So to do that I want to apply a little local anesthetic and I want to take us to the Old Testament book of Daniel. You don’t need to turn there. I’m just going to give you the Cliff Notes version. We need to understand what has been going on behind the scenes for centuries. It is nothing new.

So in the book of Daniel, you’ve got this really evil king by the name of Nebuchadnezzar.

Everybody say “Nebuchadnezzar.” It’s a fun name to say, but he’s an evil guy. And he rules over the city of Babylon. And he captures Jerusalem. And when he does, he takes into captivity four young men from Judah’s royal family. They are the best of the best.

And he intentionally does that because he wants to take the best of the best from the opposing team, and he wants to indoctrinate them into the ideology of the Babylonian culture. So he changes their diet, he changes their training regiment, their study curriculum, and even their names.

Daniel's name gets changed to Belteshazzar and then his three friends are Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego, or if you grew up in church in the 90s, Rack, Shack, and Benny, alright? So he takes these guys and puts them into this ideology. And they are, get this, they are determined to live for God in the midst of a very ungodly culture. And they live their lives in such a way that Jesus was on full display. Meaning, they didn't get mean, they didn't get obnoxious, they didn't get judgmental, and they didn't show up at a rally with a big sign that said #Nebuchadnezzarnotmyking. They didn't do that. They lived for Jesus in a way that stood out. Imagine that.

There is so much we can learn from these guys. In fact, this should be our next sermon series. I just decided it right now. This should be our next sermon series, alright? Check this out, chapter 1, verse 20:

*"Whenever the king consulted them in any matter requiring wisdom and balanced judgment," because God gave them this incredible ability, even the ability to interpret dreams, "he found them," look at this, "ten times more capable than any of the magicians and enchanter in his entire kingdom. (NLT)*

Now these guys were living in such a way that it stood out and Nebuchadnezzar was like, "Man, what is different about you guys?" Fast forward to Daniel, chapter 3, Nebuchadnezzar makes this gold statue 90 feet tall and 9 feet wide and he tells everyone in Babylon to bow down, including our boys Daniel, Shadrack, Meshack, and Abednego. Verse 4:

*"Then a herald shouted out, 'People of all races and nations and languages, listen to the king's command! When you hear the sound of the horn, flute, zither,'" I play a mean zither, by the way, "'lyre, harp, pipes, and other musical instruments, bow to the ground to worship King Nebuchadnezzar's gold statue. Anyone who refuses to obey will immediately be thrown into a blazing furnace.'"*

*Now, what I want to point out here is this isn't just a kid's story. This is a counterfeit worship service. It is the demonic equivalent of what we just did a few minutes ago. There was an image to worship. We worship an image too. We worship the image of Jesus, who is the image of the invisible God and the exact representation of His nature.*

*And here Nebuchadnezzar said, "Bow to this counterfeit king," the gold statue, "and if you don't, we'll throw you into a counterfeit hell," a fiery furnace.*

*Now, last week I told you that we have a very, very real enemy behind the scenes who is not a cartoon character. And he doesn't do the foaming at the mouth, head spinning around thing that Hollywood portrays him as. He's just simply a really, really good liar. He's a deceiver—lots of smoke and mirrors.*

*And here's the deal. He's been doing it way longer than you've been around, and he knows all the tricks of the trade. We've just got to open ourselves up to the fact that we could be deceived by a deceiver, because he's really, really good.*

*Here's the other thing that he is. He is a counterfeit. Satan does not have an original bone in his body. God creates. Satan counterfeits. What that means is that God gave us Fruit Loops, which we all know He did, Satan gives us Fruit Spins. God gave us Pringles, Satan gave us Prongles. God gives us Dr. Pepper or Mountain Dew; Satan gives us Dr. Bob and Mountain Shoutin. If God is the true God of heaven, which He is, Satan is the counterfeit, lowercase g god of this world. God gives the Holy Spirit. The word is paraclete, which means helper. Satan counterfeits*

*with unholy spirits called demons. God creates revival. Satan counterfeits with confusion, chaos, and pandemics.*

*God calls people to repent from destructive behavior and false beliefs because He loves us. Satan counterfeits with tolerance and normalizes destructive behavior and false beliefs because he hates us. Whatever God creates, Satan counterfeits and he is still doing this today. And the church has been on its heels long enough. We need to recognize that the Bible says our real battle is not against flesh and blood. What that means is that our battle is not against people who have different political convictions than you or somebody who has a different skin color, or nationality, or a lifestyle—our real battle is against the principalities and powers of this dark world, behind the scenes creating confusion and division and chaos.*

*Therefore, the church doesn't need to be woke as much as it needs to be awakened. And what I mean by that is that we recognize the injustices that have gone on in our past and even today and we recognize the real enemy behind those injustices, and we say, "No more, in the name of Jesus, no more. You're not going to create this division and confusion and friendly fire within the body of Christ anymore."*

*Now, you might be sitting there going, "Okay, Aaron. Nice little history lesson from the Old Testament. Nobody is creating gold images today to tell us to bow down."*

*Well, you might want to rethink that. This is from North Korea [Mansu Hill Grand Monument]. This is not 600 BC this is 2021 AD. These are some government leaders in North Korea and people are bowing down to these gold images.*

*This is from Turkmenistan. This is a warrior on a horse riding in with a sword [gold image on top of a cliff of white marble] and if you know anything at all about your Bible, specifically Revelation, you know that is a copywrite infringement. That is our thing. Jesus rides in on a horse with a sword coming out of His mouth and a tatt on His leg. That's ours.*

*Here's the next one. This is modern day China [gold statue of Chairman Mao]. That's just downright creepy, right?*

*Now, you look at all of this and you say, "Why are these same things still happening?" It's because the same spirit is still working. Times, places, and people change, the spirit behind it remains the same.*

*That means that as a church we have to be full of the Holy Spirit because we are in a battle with unholy spirits. We need an outpouring of the Spirit of God and power not just more fancy strategies.*

*So our culture in the western world today, I would agree with you, is likely not going to create a 90-foot gold statue and tell us to bow down. But what our culture will do is that it will tell us to bow down to an ideology:*

*Ideologies are the idols of our day*

*There are ideologies in our culture right now that if you will not bow down, and they don't use the word bow they use the word affirm everything in the ideology, we won't throw you into a furnace, but we will fire you, cancel you, boycott you, de-platform you, remove your books from Amazon. Bow to the counterfeit or else. This has always been Satan's strategy.*

*Now, fast forward 800 years after the book of Daniel to the book of Revelation and the city of Babylon, which is long gone, gets mentioned in Revelation, chapter 14. It says:*

*"Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great," in other words, she is no longer here, "she who made all nations drink the wine of the passion of her sexual immorality." (ESV)*

This is saying that the city of Babylon is long gone, but the spirit of Babylon is here working behind every culture and nation across time, urging people, moving people away from faithfulness to Jesus. In other words, Satan really isn't all that bothered with you believing in God. What bothers him is when you follow Him.

He's like, "Believe in Him all you want but I want to try to urge away from faithfulness." What he'd really like to do is to get you to not believe in God at all, but if you won't do that because God has placed eternity in your heart, (amen?) he will just get you to reshape what Jesus says to fit the way that you want to live.

And the primary strategy is sexual immorality in all of its forms. Why? Well because whatever God creates Satan counterfeits. So God created the universe and He said it was good. Then He created the human body and He said, "Oh, man. That is very good." So Satan takes the apex of God's creation—did you know that you are the apex of His creation?—and he creates a counterfeit. And he's urging us to replace it for God, Himself.

In other words, the thing that is most likely to replace the worship of God in our lives is the worship of sex. The sexual revolution ideology of the last 50 years is the dominant ideology shaping our culture today, because times, places, and people change but the spirit behind them remains the same.

Now, it is with that knowledge that we are ready to read Romans, chapter 1, verse 18—preaching helmet is on, alright?

*"But God shows his anger from heaven against all sinful, wicked people who suppress the truth by their wickedness."*(NLT)

Now, automatically there might be a little bit of an emotional response that rises up within you. You're like, "I don't like that at all. Talking about the anger of God?" Some translations call it the wrath of God. And you say, "Well, that sounds oppressive and repressive, and God is love."

He is. But you need to understand that the opposite of love is not anger, the opposite of love is indifference. The very fact that God is angry shows how great His love is for you.

Here's a question that I've got: why is it not okay for God to be angry? You are. Aren't you angry right now about something? Haven't you been angry over the last year-and-a-half about something? Whether it's politics or social issues or mask mandates or vaccine or no vaccine—we get angry over things.

Here's the thing that is right for us to get angry about: we should get angry about injustices that we see in the world. However, we need to come to recognize that everyone everywhere is guilty and on the wrong side of the greatest injustice ever committed. We put God on a cross. Here's another question: you ever been ripped off? Have you ever had somebody misrepresent something you said? Have you ever had someone steal intellectual property from you? Doesn't it make you angry?

See, God created this world. He designed it to be without pain, disease, war, hurt, and pandemics. And the enemy came in and he lured us away with empty promises that turned out to be outright lies.

It goes all the way back to the question that he asked Adam and Eve in Genesis, "Did God really say?" What does that sound like? We take Jesus. We don't like what He says because it means that we've got to change the way we live so we reshape it and we say, "Well, He didn't really mean that." That is the play that he has been using since the beginning of time, through this

world and this chaos and brokenness, the effects of which we all feel, but it was never intended to be this way.

When was the last time that you genuinely grieved the relationship with God you were meant to have but don't have? It's because of your sin and other people's sin. I don't know. I think anger is a pretty appropriate response. Maybe we can cut God some slack and know that He's not angry at you, He's angry for you. Verse 19:

*"They know the truth about God because he has made it obvious to them. For ever since the world was created, people have seen the earth and sky. Through everything God made, they can clearly see his invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature. So they have no excuse for not knowing God."*

*One of the oldest arguments that I hear periodically is people will say, "I don't know that I can believe in God because what about all of the people who have never heard? And I think we have this false idea or dichotomy in our minds that one day we're going to stand before God and God is going to be standing in front of the pearly gates and He's going to say, "Why should I let you in?" And we're going to fumble around with our words and we're going to say, "Well, I was a really good person." Or "I meant well." "I attended Christmas and Easter." And God's going to go, "Yeah, but you didn't know Jesus, sucker." And He's going to throw us out and we're going to go, "Nooooobody ever told me." Come on. I think we use that as a smoke screen.*

*Let me make this one observation. It's interesting to me that everybody I've ever heard that from has heard. Okay? So let God do His job. He's sovereign over the people who "haven't heard." But right here, Paul says in Romans that everybody knows. He has invisible qualities. In other words, he's saying that in the same that a house reveals something about its builder, even though you never met the builder, or a painting reveals something about a painter, even though you never met the painter. Creation says something about its Creator, even though you haven't seen the Creator with your own eyeballs.*

*All of this just fell into place? How do you explain this? How do you explain why we sort of feel bad about things that are wrong in the world? Where does that even come from? So this is what a lot of philosophers will call—now I'm not going to nerd out on this too much, I just want to introduce the terms to you. One is called the:*

Cosmological argument

This goes all the way back to the days of Aristotle. Here is the question behind this argument:

Why is there something rather than nothing and where did the original something come from? What that means is if the world really did indeed begin billions of years ago with a bang, where did the materials that caused the bang come from? You can't just keep going back in infinite regress into nothingness. Eventually something has to come from somewhere, nothingness doesn't just explode. Although, it would be really cool just to make something explode with my mind.

Here's the Teleological argument:

And the root word there is teleos, it just means purpose. What that means is when scientists look at the universe, they will say that it feels as if everything has been finely tuned for a purpose, the purpose namely being life on planet earth.



So if you look at the atmosphere the levels of nitrogen, oxygen, and carbon dioxide are so dialed in that if they are off just a little bit life is unsustainable on earth.

Or take the water molecule. Many of you know that it's the only molecule whose solid form, ice, is less dense than its liquid form. Which means that ice cubes float to the top of your iced tea instead of drifting to the bottom. That's a big deal when it comes to the oceans, because if ice didn't float it would drift to the bottom of the ocean, freezing the oceans making life unsustainable on earth.

Or check this out. If Jupiter wasn't the size it is and in the orbit that it is in astronomers predict that there would be 10,000 times the number of asteroid strikes here on earth, making life unsustainable.

Do you realize what that means? Jupiter is like the Dennis Rodman of planets. He is grabbing rebounds a setting picks so that way planet earth can get open for the three-pointer of life. And those of you who have no idea what I'm talking about, because you don't know basketball, trust me—that's good.

Or we could put away our telescope and we could pull out our microscope and see the same thing. The strands of DNA are absolutely incredible and it's phenomenal to think that that just happened over billions and billions and billions of years. It would be similar to if an ink factory just exploded and then a billion years later produced the collective works of Shakespeare.

Scientists say that the odds of this happening are like someone flipping a coin and it coming up heads every second for 10 billion years in a row. So either we're just that lucky, or perhaps we have an anti-God bias.

We know we don't want to know, because if it's true, that means some things in my life have to change. It's like pushing a beach ball under the water. It's just going to keep coming up. And if anybody suggests a truth that runs against the way I want to live my life the automatic reaction is to suppress it. That is what was going on in Daniel, chapter 3.

Cancel culture is another form of Romans 1 truth suppression. Because the Bible doesn't just tell us what happened a long, long time ago, it tells us what always happens when an ideology becomes an idol. Look at verse 21:

*"Yes, they knew God, but they wouldn't worship him as God or even give him thanks. And they began to think up foolish ideas of what God was like. As a result, their minds became dark and confused. Claiming to be wise, they instead became utter fools. And instead of worshiping the glorious, ever-living God, they worshiped idols made to look like mere people and birds and animals and reptiles."*

I've said this to you before. We were all made to worship. Even if you don't believe in God and if you're not musical. What worship is, it is affection aimed toward something. And we're all doing it. We worship at a concert. We worship at a football game. We are taking our affections and aiming them. And here he's saying that we don't just stop worshiping if we don't worship God. We worship created things. We worship other things.

And I don't want to oversimplify this, but this is a lot of what we are seeing today. A lot of addictions of all kinds, whether you are addicted to video games, food, alcohol, sports, working

out, or porn, those are all worship problems. We are nursing our wounds and insecurities and shortcomings, we are taking our affections and aiming them in the wrong places, and it doesn't fulfill, and it produces anxiety and depression.

*"So God abandoned them to do whatever shameful things their hearts desired."* Romans 1:24 (NLT)

That sounds really, really harsh unless you're a parent with small kids. Any of you ever been with your kids and they are asking for something that is going to harm them. They think it's good, "Can we please stay up all night?" "Can we please eat the whole jar of Nutella?" And eventually you're tired of fighting with them. And you're like, "Knock yourself out. We'll see how that goes for you."

Understand, God's not being harsh here. Every time the Bible says "don't" that is God saying, "Don't hurt yourself." But because He's given us free will He will say, "Hey, listen. Go ahead. Knock yourself out. Go down that road. See how that's going to work out for you." But He continues to be here, and He's made a way for us to get back to Him by grace. I'm so thankful for that.

Over the course of human history the thing that we tend to worship the most is sex. And what this next section is going to say is that the real test of Lordship in our lives usually ends up manifesting itself in some way as a form of sexuality. Sex replaces God as the new religion. Look at what it says, verse 24:

*"As a result, they did vile and degrading things with each other's bodies. They traded the truth about God for a lie." There it is. "So they worshiped and served the things God created instead of the Creator himself, who is worthy of eternal praise! Amen."*

*Now, I just want to say this to the room and to everybody at all of our campuses and online, right now put away the binoculars and grab a mirror, because what Paul is going to say is that we are all in the same boat, we are all guilty of the same thing.*

*The word lust in the Greek is the word porneia and it simply means any sexual activity in thought in eyes or in body outside of a biblically defined marriage between a man and a woman. And Jesus would even take it a step farther and He would say, "If you've even had a lustful thought, you're already guilty of committing adultery."*

*And I thought about asking you to raise your hands if you've ever had a lustful thought, but I already know the answer. We're all in the same boat. And listen. God does not send people to hell for sexual sin. No, in our sexual sin we want what we want and so we exchange the truth of God for a lie. And listen, over and over and over and over again, it separates us from Christ and Christ is our only bridge to God. Verse 26:*

*"That is why God abandoned them to their shameful desires. Even the women turned against the natural way to have sex and instead indulged in sex with each other. And the men, instead of having normal sexual relations with women, burned with lust for each other. Men did shameful things with other men, and as a result of this sin, they suffered within themselves the penalty they deserved."*

*Now, I want you to know that if there is an emotional reaction that is rising up within you, it's because everything within our culture calibrates the compass in exact opposition of what you just heard.*

*I do want you to know that Paul is not picking on same-sex attraction, because if you read this within it's entire context what he is doing, he is providing a pretty exhaustive list of all of the things in which we have been deceived to exchange the truth of God for a lie and he is going to put—we're not there yet, we're going to get to it—he's going to put gossip and disobedience to parents right next to this. This how we've all done it.*

*Now, you might be here and you're like, "Well, how does the church think about this issue?" I preached specifically to this topic in April of 2019 in a series called Asking for a Friend. I'd encourage you to go back. It's on YouTube and on our website. You can watch it. And then the week following a friend of mine named Caleb Kaltenbach, who was raised by two gay parents, was here and he preached on this subject. I think those messages will really, really help you.*

*What I want you to understand is that this ideology has been so inundated within our culture that automatically there are all kinds of questions and maybe even resistances.*

*And I would just simply say this, whether it's same sex attraction, or opposite sex attraction, where we are tempted to treat it outside of the way that God designed it, here's the line of reasoning, and it's maybe what some of you are thinking right now, "Aaron, people, in order to be complete and a fulfilled person, have to have sex."*

*And I would just simply say, we worship a man who died single and never had sex. Jesus was the most peace filled, content, healthiest person to ever walk the planet and He died in abstinence. He never had sex.*

*Can I just say this very lovingly? In order to be a complete and fulfilled person you don't have to have sex. You're not doing it right now. At least we hope not. In fact, many of you right now, if you're being really honest... I've got a broken heart like multiple times over and a bunch of other issues I'm dealing with because I sought to satisfy sexual urges outside of how God designed it.*

*Now, listen. God is not a prude. This is not old fashioned. God is the One who created this. He's all for it. But it's like fire. It's a helpful analogy. Fire is great when it is in an environment where it can provide warmth for your household. Get it outside of that, it burns the house down.*

*"Since they thought it foolish to acknowledge God, he abandoned them to their foolish thinking and let them do things that should never be done. Their lives became full of," now here's the exhaustive list, and we're all in it, "every kind of wickedness, sin, greed, hate, envy, murder, quarreling, deception, malicious behavior, and gossip. They are backstabbers, haters of God, insolent, proud, and boastful. They invent new ways of sinning, and they disobey their parents." I love that how he just throws that in there. "They refuse to understand, break their promises, are heartless, and have no mercy. Romans 1:28-31 (NLT)*

*Here's what I want to point out. In those four verses he said a mouthful, but in them you will find the roots of:*

Economic disorder

Social disorder

Spiritual disorder

Family disorder

It's all in there. Remember, we have an enemy who specializes in deceit, and he counterfeits the good gifts of God. And oftentimes I will hear, you've likely heard it too, maybe you've even said it, "How can God be so good when He allows all of the pain and the suffering that is in this world?"

I'll simply draw your attention back to the fact that we have an enemy behind the scenes who is creating chaos. God so often gets blamed for Satan's schemes. Here's what that means. Satan breaks wind in the back seat, God gets blamed for it.

Listen. Jesus defeated him on a cross. His destiny has been decided. And now he is wreaking as much havoc as he possibly can on God's creation. And since you are the apex of God's creation, guess who is enemy number one to him? He's gunning for you. It's like he is a rabid dog on a chain. He can run around in a certain parameter, but he's limited and he's trying to bite everyone he can.

And the answer to this is not to reject God due to the pain and suffering of this world, it is to run to Him. Look at verse 32:

*"They know God's justice requires that those who do these things deserve to die, yet they do them anyway. Worse yet, they encourage others to do them, too."*

So what that means is that the ideology of culture demands that you approve of them doing these things, "Unless I celebrate and support you then I'm intolerant." Let me say this as lovingly as I can. If you need other people's approval for your convictions, then maybe you need to reconsider your convictions.

And I just want you to hear my heart in this. I just want to talk to you for a minute. Right now, if you're uncomfortable, if you're angry, if you're like, "This is not the church for me," I totally respect that.

Let me just say this. If you don't like what God says about sexuality but you really want to follow Jesus, you need to ask God to change your heart. If you don't like what God says about money and generosity, you need to ask God to change your heart. If you don't like what God says about loving your enemies and forgiving those who hurt you, you need to ask God to change your heart.

And here's why. He's not changing. He's not changing for you. He's not changing for me. He's not changing for the culture. Here's what He said that He would change. He sent Jesus to a cross to change your heart; it's for the transformation of the heart.

Now for those of us who are feeling pretty good about ourselves, because this whole sermon you've been like, "Amen. Oh, man. I'm going to sent this to my neighbor." Chapter 2, verse 1 he's going to take aim at the rest of us. Check this out:

*"You may think you can condemn such people," who are such people in your mind? "...but you are just as bad, and you have no excuse!" I think he just opened hand slapped us. "When you say*

*they are wicked and should be punished, you are condemning yourself, for you who judge others do these very same things. And we know that God, in his justice, will punish anyone who does such things."*

What he is referring to here is what theologians will call the doctrine of:

Total depravity

And the doctrine of total depravity says: while everything we do is not completely sinful, (this means that there is good in you, there is good in everyone, why? Because everyone was created in the image of a good God, there is good in you). Listen, it's not enough. Why? Because nothing we do is completely untouched by sin.

Which means that our perspectives and our desires and all of that stuff has a flawed, fallen, sin nature to it which makes us susceptible to the deceptions of an enemy and we need the Holy Spirit to give us eyes to see.

So, he's saying here, "Listen. No amount of work will pay it off. No amount of good effort will pay it off. You need a Savior." And I can only begin to grasp the power of the Gospel when I understand, just like Paul, I'm speaking as Aaron Brockett here, the worst sinner I know is me. I'm the worst sinner I know. I know my heart. I know my motives. I know how subtle I can be with them. I know the things that I need to continue to submit and re-submit to the Lordship of Christ.

Self-righteousness always leads to self-condemning. And now he's going to end on a high note. Aren't you thankful for that? "About time," somebody said.

*"Don't you see how wonderfully kind, tolerant, and patient God is with you?" That's a question for you. "Does this mean nothing to you? Can't you see that his kindness is intended to turn you from your sin?" Romans 2:4 (NLT)*

What does that mean? That means that we've all allowed ourselves to be deceived by a deceiver. We've all said, "Well, I love Jesus, but I don't really like what He says about such and such, so I'm going to twist Jesus to fit the way I want to live." It means, "I love Jesus as Savior but not really as Lord, and yet I'm still here and I am still drawing breath into my lungs." And God hasn't returned yet. And that is an act of kindness because He wants everyone to come to repentance. He wants everyone to change.

I want to wrap up with something that I heard a lady name Jen Wilkens say just this last week. On her podcast she was talking about the end of Romans 1, and she said this, and I about fell out of my chair. She said:

"There are two ways to escape feeling guilty about your sin: You can repent or repeat. Turn from it or repeat it over and over until you no longer feel remorse."

You no longer feel any conviction over it.

I would even say that if you've done something and you just feel the heaviness, that conviction, that is the Holy Spirit and that's actually a really, really good thing. None of us are perfect. We're going to continue to fall, and we've got God's grace.

What should alarm you is when you no longer feel convicted. And right now if you feel convicted you need to act upon what you have heard. Who or what has your heart right now? And you can make that decision today.

So what I want to ask you to do is to just ask yourself, "How do I need to respond to this message?" For some of you you just need somebody to pray with you. Some of you may need to confess some stuff. Some of you need to say, "I've been guilty of this. I've been trying to twist Jesus into the way that I want to live. No more. I want to follow Jesus as Savior and Lord."

Some of you today need to be baptized. And I want you to know that the waters of the baptistry are going to be open this entire series long. What better time to do it? And so today, at all of our campuses, if you want to be baptized, we will be more than happy to sit down with you and talk with you and get that done.

But you need to respond in some way. Don't bow to the counterfeit. Bow to the one true King who in His grace loves you enough to give everything to reconcile that relationship with you.

I'm just going to ask all of our campuses right now if you would to stand to your feet. I'm going to pray. We're going to sing. And we're going to give you a chance to respond.

Father, we come to You today and we thank You so much for Your infinite and goodness and kindness and forgive us when we exchange the truth that You have given us for a lie. God, fill us with Your Holy Spirit. Give us eyes to see what's really going on. God, I pray that You would take this conviction that we feel and turn it into tangible action that would draw us closer to You.

God, the church—we've been on heels for far too long. Right now we want to keep our eyes fixed on You. We want to lean in. We want to come together, and we want to push back the principalities and powers of this dark world because You have given us the Holy Spirit to do so. We ask this in Jesus' name. And everybody says: Amen.