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SERIES: Romans (The Constitution Of Your Faith)

TITLE: Program 7 – God Gave Them Over To Degrading Passions

TUESDAY

OPEN

What happens when a nation turns its back on God, when a nation doesn't honor God as God? What happens when a nation sets its own standards? What happens when a nation calls evil good and good evil? Well you can pick up the history of the Roman Empire and you can find out what happened when Rome turned their back on any fear of God at all. Where does it lead? That's what we're going to talk about today.

PART ONE

In verse 22, "Professing to be wise, they became fools and they exchanged the glory of an incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man, of birds, and four-footed animals and crawling creatures." Now remember we saw last week that they exchanged three things. So when men don't honor God as God they're still have to worship a god. And so they change the image of God into an image made like man or creatures and they

begin to worship them. And when they do this then God responds. God folds His arms and it says God, “For this reason ...,” it says, “... God gave them over to the lusts of their hearts to impurity that their bodies might be dishonored among them.” When we turn away from truth, when we call evil good and good evil, when we exchange truth for a lie, what happens is the first thing we find is we find ourselves giving ourselves over to impurity and dishonoring our bodies. Do you realize that sex outside of the confines of marriage, sex outside of marriage dishonors your body, that every time that you have sex and you’re not married to that person you are dishonoring your body? God says in Hebrews, chapter 13, in verse 4 that “Marriage is honorable in all and the bed undefiled, but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.” In 1 Thessalonians, chapter 4 he says, “This is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you abstain from sexual immorality.” You see when I say, God, You really aren’t who You say you are here. You don’t really mean what you say about Yourself. You really don’t expect us to keep Your commandments. We really can do whatever we want and get away with it, then what happens is God gives us over. And God gives us over to the lusts of our hearts and consequently we dishonor our bodies. But that’s not the only thing. There’s a progression here. And it says in verse 25, “For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie.” So first they exchanged the glory of God of an incorruptible God into an image, then the second thing that they exchange is they exchange truth for a lie. And God gives them over again because they do this. It says, “Therefore, God gave them over to degrading passions.” It says, “For their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural and in the same way men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desires toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts, receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.” So what does God give them over to? God gives them over to turning away from the natural use of a woman. In other words, from the normal way to have sex to a perverted way to have sex, to an unnatural way to have sex. For two men to come together and

have sex, they have to do it in an unnatural way and that unnatural way has led to disease in the lungs and it has led to AIDS. It's led to all sorts of terrible things. Why? What happens is, they are not only dishonoring their bodies, but they are degrading their bodies. This is degradation. But that's not the end of it. And it says, "And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, they didn't want to acknowledge God any longer." They wanted to push Him totally out of their minds. "God gave them over to a depraved mind ...," Now watch. "They closed the door of their mind to God." I don't want to think about Him. I don't want to talk about Him. I don't want to know about Him. I don't want you to mention Him. I don't want to hear Jesus Christ on television. I don't want to hear God on television. I don't want to pick up anything. You Christians go home. Stay in your own four walls. Don't tell me anything about God. The minute that you close your mind to God, the minute that you slam those doors shut, do you know what happens? God gives you over to a depraved mind. The King James Version of the Bible calls it a reprobate mind. This is a mind that has no absolutes. This is a mind that has no restraints. This is a mind that goes wherever it wants to go and it goes down a very dark dark path. And listen to the result of it. Listen carefully. It says, "And God gave them over ...," and you want to mark that again because this is the third God gave them over. "... God gave them over to a depraved mind to do ...," watch the word, "... to do those things which are not proper." What is God saying? God's saying this that there are things that are proper and there are things that are not proper. You go to the malls; you see the way the kids are dressed. Are they properly dressed? A friend of mine said that he went as a board member to a Christian camp. And this Christian camp was having a big, big event in order to attract kids to the gospel of Jesus Christ. And he said, when I went to that camp and I saw those girls, he said I thought it's going to be miracle if they're not raped before they leave here. What is the problem? The problem is that we end up with a depraved mind, a reprobate mind, a mind that has no absolutes, a mind that has no restraints. And so

watch what it says. “And they, being filled with all unrighteousness, not only do they do the things which are not proper, but they’re filled with all unrighteousness. Wickedness, greed, evil, full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice” This is what they’re filled with. Then it says, “They are ...,” and this is what they are, “They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, without understanding ...,” This is what they’re lacking. They’re without understanding. “... They’re untrustworthy. They are unloving. They are unmerciful.” In other words they can do cruel things to other people and it doesn’t even bother them. They’re consciences are absolutely seared. Why? Because they have shut their minds to God. They have blocked God out. There’s no fear of God. There’s no respect of God. There’s no trust of God. There’s no holy trembling before a holy God. Why? Because they have totally blocked Him out of their minds and therefore they have a reprobate mind. They have a mind that has no restraints. These are the things that they do. These are the things that they are filled with. These are the things that they are and these are the things that are lacking. They’re unloving. They don’t even have natural affections. They don’t have natural affections for their parents. They don’t have natural affections for their siblings. They are unmerciful. But listen to this; this is the end of this chapter. And this is a terrible, terrible indictment upon this culture. It says, “And although they know the ordinance of God ...,” in other words they have that God consciousness inside of them. “Although they know the ordinances of God that they not, they not only do the same but they give hardy approval to those who practice them.” In other words, what do they do? They applaud them. They say hey that’s great. They laugh. They carry on. There’s no one that stands up and says, wait a minute, you have crossed the line. Wait a minute, you have gone too far. A missionary in China was reading Romans, chapter 1 to a group of Chinese and when he got through, an indignant Chinese man came up to him, came up to another person that was by the platform, and he said, this is not right. Let me quote to you what he said.

“This foreign devil shouldn’t have come here. He should not have found out these things about us. He should not have written them in that book.” He says, “How did he know this about us and what gave him the right to write it in a book and then to read it to us publicly?” You see, the Word of God is like a mirror. We read it. We look at it and we see ourselves. We either see a beautiful reflection of what God intended man to be or we see a terrible, terrible distortion. And what you see in Romans, chapter 1, doesn’t it describe where we are in the United States of America today? Doesn’t it describe what’s going on in our society? We’re looking at things in our society that we are condoning that we once said was against the law. It was once against the law in over half of the states of the United States of America to, for a man to sleep with a man. It was against the law. Lesbianism was against the law. Adultery was against the law. Nudity was against the law. Child pornography was against the law. Abortion was against the law. Immodesty, in public, was against the law. It was against the law on television because there were people that would stand up and say, I’m sorry, but this is wrong. We don’t like the term censorship, do we? But they formed a group of censors that would keep American moral. And then you know what, that form, that group of censors finally just walked away. They thought their job was done. And you know what? It took us deep deep deep into sin and into the judgment of God. And our society is where it is morally, right now, because we have turned away from honoring God as God and God has given us up.

PART TWO

So what happens when a society, when a people forget God, when they don’t honor Him as God, when they shut Him out of their thinking, when they exchange truth for a lie? We saw it, but let me summarize it. They go into their lusts. They go into their immorality and that adultery that they go into dishonors their bodies. Then from there they go into homosexuality and

lesbianism. And what is that called? It's called degrading passions. They degrade themselves. Why? Because they leave the natural, what God ordained, and they substitute the unnatural. A man leaves the natural use of a woman and goes to a man and has sex with him instead. A woman goes to another woman. She leaves the natural use of a man and she goes to another woman instead. And when they go to each other they cannot have sex in a natural way. You know two lesbians can never have a child. They can never produce a child. And two homosexuals can never produce a child. This is why they want to adopt them. Now I know that so many people are into homosexuality and they're into lesbianism because they've been hurt, because they've been wounded, because they've been introduced to sex in an unnatural way, because they've been molested as a child. I know that. I know that they didn't have a good father figure. I know that they didn't have a good mother figure. And I know that many of them are saying, listen, I was just born this way. Listen, you were not born that way. You were born a sinner and a sinner is capable of these kinds of actions, but you were not born an adulterer. You were not born a homosexual. You were not born a lesbian. You were born a sinner and this is the consequences of sin. And it ought to be such wonderful news for you because it means, then that you don't have to live this way. Do you know that there's more violence among homosexual couples and lesbians than there is among heterosexual couples? And I think it's really because what has happened is we have shut out God, because we've turned our backs on God. And where does it all lead to? It leads to a depraved mind, a depraved mind that cannot see right and wrong, that has no values, that says, you know whatever I want to do. It leads to masochism. It leads to sadism. It leads to pedophilia. It leads to sex with children. It leads to all sorts of things that are just a matter of a depraved mind. God says that, "... we receive in ourselves the due penalty of our error." When Paul wrote this he was writing to a society that is just like ours. He was writing during the time of the Roman Empire. Remember it was 56, 57, 58 A.D when he wrote this. Well let me tell you some of the things about

the Roman Empire that you might find very useful. And they come out of this book, “Under the Influence, How Christianity Transforms Civilization”. The civilization that we’re living in today wants to get rid of Christianity. They don’t want to hear anything about God or Jesus Christ, yet they don’t realize what Christianity did for civilization, how it elevated women to a place that they had never been elevated to, how it took care of the poor and how it took care of the sick and how it moved in and changed the educational system and all for the better and how it changed the morals. But listen to what was going on in the Roman society. After the Punic Wars in 146 B.C. Rome started to go down morally. It became so immoral that Caesar Augustus in 18 B.C. enacted a law that tried to curb people’s addiction to illicit sex. But the law did not work. Then you come along and you read that marriage was detested as a disagreeable necessity. Since people had become obsessed with sex, marital unions were very short lived. Does that sound like us today? Of course it does. Juvenal, when he wrote his satire number 6, he portrayed the sexually loose morals of women who lecherously gave themselves to gladiators, actors, comedians and others who were in the public spotlight. Does that sound like today? Of course it sounds like today. You listen to MTV, you listen to that channel and what do they tell you? They’ll have many rock stars on and they’ll tell about all their one-night stands with all these girls and they laugh at about how they got away with it. And then you come and you read about Ovid who was another writer of those days and he notes that female and male sexual relationships had become sadistic and masochistic. In one of his books he reveals how, for many, heterosexual love had turned into a type of sport. And then Catalyst, a Roman poet refers to his fellow Romans, practicing group sex. Is all that going on? Yes, it’s going on. Some cities, that’s their entertainment. That’s their entertainment. And they think nothing of it. It’s exactly what Romans describes. It’s a reprobate mind. Then you come down and you see that one historian said that the Romans, there was nothing in which the Romans did not indulge or which they thought was a disgrace. What is he describing?

He's describing the reprobate mind, the depraved mind, that has no absolutes, that is just filled with sin, that is just taken deeper and deeper and deeper into sin so that all they want to do is find someone else who is just like them because it condones their sin and then they give hardy approval to that even though deep in their hearts they know that they are worthy of death. And do you know what? Death awaits them. Wrath awaits them. We're going to see the judgment of God next week. We're going to look at it and we're going to see what the judgment of God is like. But let me just say that it talks about the plays that they went to, so just think of television or think of movies and substituted these shocking dumb shows threw women into ecstasy. Now what were these shows? Well sometimes they showed a woman having sex with an animal on stage. It was filled with crude sexual gestures that the actors would make and it threw the women into ecstasy. It says that these plays went on during the reigns of Nero. Nero was 54 to 68 A.D., so it's right during the time when Paul is writing this. And what do you find? You find as you go on that legend says that Tiberius the emperor, under whose rule, Christ was crucified, often surrounded himself with young boys whom he used sexually. Nero had at least two boys with whom he engaged in sexual acts. And Hadrian was the one that persecuted Christians so greatly. He's the one that built Hadrian's Wall across northern England, but he had numerous affairs, not only with women, but also with a young man that he kept as his paramour. Rome, the United States of America, we're both the same, aren't we? You've seen it. It's written in history and its being written in our history. Why? It's because men do not honor God as God. O, Precious One, that's why we're studying the Word of God, so that you can know truth, so that you can know God, so that you can honor God as God, so that you can live by faith, so that you can be righteous, and so that you in turn can shed light in the midst of this crooked and dark and perverse generation.