

“How the Fall Affects Us All”

// Romans 1:24–32 //

Romans #4

Alright... Romans 1. This might be the toughest week we'll have in Romans—tied only with Romans 5, Romans 9, and Romans 11.

So, everybody turn to your neighbor right now and say, *“These are going to be some hard truths; I am praying that you have enough humility and faith to receive this words. But from the looks of you, I'm not optimistic.”*

I've been pretty nervous: My wife was trying to give me some encouragement. She said, 'Look... it's not about you. Just teach what the Bible says. Don't try to be too witty or intellectual. Just be yourself.' So, I'm not sure what that means.

But let's pray

- And let me say to you **parents**, the text this week definitely has some adult-oriented material. In this passage Paul address same-sex attraction. And, he talks about certain societal sins that younger ears may not be ready for.
- So, this may be an **ideal week to have your kids try out our** excellent kid's ministry options. If you go back to the lobby at your campus, someone can guide you there.

So, as I pray, you can duck out and be back before we really get going...

P. 20 in your Journal. Here's where we left off last week: In Romans

1 Paul is showing us that every person (Jew, Gentile, religious,

irreligious) has the same problem: we have **turned away from the knowledge of God** manifest in creation and in our consciences.

God has sufficiently revealed himself, Paul says, both to us (from the Creation) and **in us (through our consciences)** for us to respond with humility and awe--but **we didn't want to know the truth about a glorious, ruling, holy God, and that's** because **we** wanted to be the glorious, all-wise, all-ruling ones. So, we **suppressed** the truth.

That suppression takes 1 of 2 forms, I explained:

- There is an **irreligious expression**--atheism, or agnosticism, where we just deny God exists. While some are genuinely convinced they are atheists, according to Paul, arriving at that conclusion comes from a heart biased against the obvious evidence to the contrary.
 - And I'll say: **Listen closely to an atheist** and you'll **almost always hear that it's some implication** of there being an all-glorious, all-wise God drives how they interpret the evidence:
 - If there is a God, why would he allow suffering?
 - Why would he make himself known to so few people?
 - Or something like that.
- Then there is the **religious version** of suppression: we substitute out the true God with a version of him we can control.
 - Throughout history **mankind has worshipped all kinds of different gods**, but they've all had one thing in common: they exist to serve us!

This is what Paul meant when he said: **²⁵ They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served what has been created instead of the Creator, who is praised forever. Amen.**

And I explained that **this worship occurs whether you are formally religious or not.**

- Anthropologists say we are telic creatures--purposed people--who always find some greater cause to live for. We find something to attach ultimate value to; something to base our lives on, something to pursue that makes life worth living.

- I love how **Jordan Peterson, who is not a Christian**, says it: *“There’s no true atheists, practically speaking. There are those who acknowledge the gods they are worshipping and those who don’t.”*
- **Even if you grew up as a Christian, chances are something besides God** took ultimate place in your heart: gaining the respect of people; accomplishing your dreams; getting married; having the approval of your friends. Something mattered more to you-- you gave more glory to it, than God. (KABOD?)
- **This is the natural shape of every human heart now, even if you grew up in church.** In some of my travels overseas I’ve had the opportunity to go into these temples built to various gods. In one Hindu country, there was this gigantic multi-armed statue of a woman with multiple breasts. You watch people come into places like this, **prostrate themselves** before it. Many travel from miles and miles to come to these places, and many are really emotional while they are doing it. Sometimes I just get so overwhelmed at the darkness in places like this that I feel like I have to leave. It’s a suffocating spiritual heaviness. And sometimes I’ll find myself feeling sorry for the people later, honestly a little condescending—and thanking God I’m not like them.
 - But here’s the thing: I have a **whole list of things that have taken God’s place in my heart, too**, and they are just as nauseating and oppressive to God as that statue is. I’ve lived for the admiration of others. For pleasure and creature comfort. For material success.
- Bottom line: **All of us, alike, have rejected the truth evident in creation and our consciences about an all-glorious, all-ruling God** and replaced him with created things, giving those things the place and priority in our hearts that **only God deserves**.
- **All of us.**

²⁶ For this reason God delivered them over to disgraceful passions.

- This was the first wave of God’s judgment, I explained. God just gave us what we asked for. So, I showed you that throughout the

rest of the passage (if you read it in Greek), there’s a lot of tit for tat:

- For example, vs. 23 they *exchanged* the glory of God for images (vs. 23) ... so God *exchanged* them over to disgraceful passions (vs. 26)
- They *dishonored* God (vs. 21) ... so God let them *dishonor* themselves (vs. 24)
- "they did not *see fit* to acknowledge God" (vs. 28) ... so God gave them up to an *unfit* mind" (vs. 28)

There’s a number of **exchanges** Paul highlights in this passage. We exchanged:

- the glory of God for images of creation (v. 23);
- the truth for a lie (v. 25);
- and the natural for the unnatural (vv. 26–27).

This is **part of God’s revelation of his righteousness** that Paul says the **book of Romans** is about, in the key verses **1:16–17**: He’s not some arbitrary, vengeful deity just pouring out judgment on us. His actions correspond perfectly to our rebellion. In fact, in the most basic sense, his judgment is **just giving us** what we ask for.

- **It’s as if the earth said to the sun**, I told you, *“I want to be at the center of the solar system”*--and the sun granted that request. The solar system would come unraveled and all the sun did was grant the earth’s request.
- So, when God granted our wish to be at the center our lives began to unravel.

Paul now begins to explain how this has played out in human history:

²⁶ Their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. ²⁷ The men in the same way also left natural relations with women and were inflamed in their lust for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the appropriate penalty of their error.

This is the longest and clearest **passage in the Bible** on homosexuality. (And let me just say, I know that we in the church haven't done a great job talking about this, or a great job caring for those going through this--but let's just look humbly and open-mindedly at what Paul says here first and then we'll talk about what it means for people following Jesus)

- Paul says that **one of the results of displacing God** in the center of our hearts was **we developed unnatural** sexual patterns.
- In one sense, we shouldn't be surprised this is where Paul turns first. **He's not picking on homosexuality.** *But if God made us in his image, male and female... then it shouldn't surprise us that the effects of our rejection of us show up in those primary relationships.*
- *Paul cites homosexuality, one scholar says, "not because it is a greater sin than any other, but because it is the clearest evidence of a rejection of God's order in creation."¹*

Now, in recent years, some have tried to say this passage to refer only to **promiscuous homosexual** acts—prostitution, or **one-night stands**, or **masters forcing slaves** to have sex with them, and that kind of stuff, and that **Paul was simply not familiar** with the committed, loving homosexual unions we see today and if he had he would have made the distinction.

- **But that won't hold up:** Paul calls any sexual relation of man between man and woman between woman "unnatural." In Greek, literally "against nature."
 - **Homosexuality**, he says, goes against the created nature God gave to us, and there is **nothing in this passage** that suggests that Paul has only certain kinds of homosexual acts in mind.
- **Furthermore, enduring, committed, same-sex relationships** were most certainly a "thing" in the Roman world and Paul definitely would have known about them.

- **Plutarch—who wrote in the 1st century**--makes a distinction between homosexual sex for mere pleasure (which he considered unworthy) and homosexual practice rooted in a committed relationship which he considered beautiful.²
- In one of **Plato's works** he mentions 2 men who were lovers for more than 10 yrs after they'd both reached full adulthood.³
- **As a well-read, well-traveled Roman citizen, Paul would certainly have known about these things.**⁴
- Yet, Paul identifies all such relations as deviating from the Creator's design for human flourishing.⁵

Again, it's important to realize that Paul is not just randomly picking on homosexuality here, he is **citing it as one of the clearest examples of elevating our desires over the Creator's design**,⁶ in which we say, "It's not about what the Creator wants; it's about what I want."

Homosexuality is not the only example, though, so Paul goes on to mention other ways that our idolatry--our prioritizing of our desires over the Creator's design, our substitution of our desires for his will--causes creation to unravel⁷

² Plutarch, *Dialogue on Love*. See also Thomas Hubbard, *Homosexuality in Greece and Rome*

³ *Symposium, Pausanias, and Agathon*

⁴ Craig Williams, *Roman Homosexuality*, and K. J. Dover, *Greek Homosexuality*.

⁵ Tim Keller, *Romans for You*, 32–33.

⁶ Tom Schreiner: "Why does Paul focus on same-sex relations, especially since it receives little attention elsewhere in his writings (1 Cor 6:9; 1 Tim 1:10)? Probably because it functions as a fitting illustration of that which is unnatural in the sexual sphere. Idolatry is unnatural in the sense that it is contrary to God's intention for human beings ... Just as idolatry is a violation and perversion of what God intended, so too same-sex relations are contrary to what God planned when he created man and woman."

⁷ Schreiner: "The fundamental sin isn't sexual but the failure to worship God. All other sin is a consequence of this one."

¹ *Read / Mark / Learn: Romans: A Small Group Bible Study* by St. Helens Bishopsgate

(We'll come **back to this discussion on homosexuality**, but first let's get through the rest of what Paul says here.)

28 And because they (btw: in chapter 2 Paul is going to show us **"they" are "we."** Paul considers himself a chief member of this group. This is not a "those people have this problem" but we all have it in some way, and it manifests itself in different forms. "We...") **did not think it worthwhile to acknowledge God, God delivered them over to a corrupt mind so that they do what is not right.** **29** They are filled with all unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. That's **economic disorder**

They are full of envy, murder, quarrels, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, **30** slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, proud, boastful, inventors of evil, That's **social disorder**

disobedient to parents, **31** senseless, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful. That's **family disorder**

And this is **not intended to be an exhaustive list**--just a sample.

The point is: **our idolatry**--putting ourselves at the center instead of God and the elevation of other things above God--has affected every part of our lives.

It's what theologians call "total depravity." Our rejection of God at the center corrupted every part of our lives.⁸

● **Me at NCSL:**

- In college, I was part of this thing called the NCSL.
- "They had questions about homosexuality and I told them you could answer them."
- "Worst sermon intro ever."
- Then I look at what I have on--purple track jacket with a teal green strip across it.

- At this point, I'm not sure I'm awake. I'm standing in a room of strangers half-naked and asked to answer the most controversial question possible. This is where I pinch myself to see if I'm awake. This feels like every speaker's worst nightmare.
- Sure enough, I was... so I was like, "Uhh... Romans 1."
- "You're saying homosexuality is the worst sin?" "No. How many of you are guilty of 95% of that list?"
- Let's go through it again: **29** They are filled with all unrighteousness, evil, greed, and wickedness. They are full of envy, murder, quarrels, deceit, and malice. They are gossips, **30** slanderers, God-haters, arrogant, proud, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, **31** senseless, untrustworthy, unloving, and unmerciful.
- These are all different ways God's first wave of judgment manifested itself in our lives. **Question: Are these things the cause of God's judgment, or the result? Both.**

BTW, the curse of sin affects different people in different ways and we **don't always get to choose which way** it affects us.

In some people, it manifests itself in envy, pride, unbridled personal ambitions, an out-of-control temper; maybe an inability to control your impulses for food; a propensity toward doubt, worry or depression.

- **In others, it manifests itself in some form of corrupted sexual desire.**
 - **And BTW**, Al Mohler points out that **all of us have** corrupted sexual desires in some form.
- **Let me say something that I fear might get misunderstood:** In that sense, you can think of **homosexuality as an affliction** and not just a sinful choice. For **most gay people**, they feel they **didn't choose those desires**.
 - Here's what I've learned: almost **every person I've encountered (in the church, at least)** who struggles with a same-sex attraction is almost always dealing first and

⁸ Tim Keller, *Romans for You*, 35

foremost with an unanswered prayer: “God, why won’t you take away these desires?”

- Let me say that again: **Every Christian I know struggling with SSA is first dealing with an unanswered prayer.**
- They **really ought to be first and foremost recipients** of our compassion.
- **This doesn’t make same-sex behavior any less sinful**, any more than it makes outbursts of temper or envy or materialism less sinful. Just that **we don’t always get to choose our weakness** or our corruption.
- That means **gay and lesbian people are not worse sinners** than other people or a different kind of sinner. They just got affected with a different dimension of the curse.
- And that **changes how we think and talk about it.**

Three ways we really go wrong with this in the church:

1. Believing God doesn’t care about this

- **He does.** He’s crystal clear in this passage, as well as 5 other ones in the Old and New Testament. Passages like this one:
 - **“Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men, nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.” (1 Cor 6:9–10)⁹**
- Someone says, **“But I was born this way.”** I don’t dispute that. And **some of us were born with a propensity toward selfish ambition** or a raging temper. The Bible’s message is **we all need to be born again.**
 - You get that **possessing a desire innately** doesn’t make it right, right?

⁹ The biblical depiction of sexuality hangs on much more than these passages, but the relevant passages *directly* addressing homosexuality are: Genesis 19:1–11, Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13, Romans 1:26–27, 1 Corinthians 6:9–10, and 1 Timothy 1:10.

- **Anger or ambition or certain sexual desires** are not right simply because they come from deep within me.
- If I were to come to my wife and say, “You are beautiful... Well, I must have been born polygamous... so I have to be true to myself, so Veronica, you are going to have to be ok with that.” Veronica would say, “I’m going to have to be true to myself and smack you upside the head with a 2x4.”
- **Possessing a desire innately** just shows us that we have corrupt hearts and we need to be born again.
- And **I know you’re confused by it**, but let’s not abandon the one thing that can give you light.

2nd way we go wrong here...

2. Thinking it’s the worst sin

- Paul lists **homosexuality as simply one corruption** among many.
- **Look at the rest of that list:** Question: **Do you think of deceit and boasting as equally ‘depraved’?** Greed? How about a **rebellious attitude** toward your parents? They are.
- **In another one of his letters**, Paul even talks about the pride that comes from religion and an **obsession to be better** than others as an example of this idolatry (Gal 4:8–9). Is that equally depraved in your book? It should be.
- **I mean, in terms of frequency of mention and passion**, it would appear that quite a few other sins are more egregious in God’s eyes than homosexuality.
 - **Jen Wilkin** says we should **whisper about what the Bible whispers about and shout about** what it shouts about. The Bible **appears more to whisper on sexual sin** compared to its shouts about materialism and religious pride.
 - **And we see Jesus demonstrating great sympathy for those in sexual sin** and great animosity toward the religiously proud.

- He never said it was **hard for the same-sex attracted to go to heaven**; he said it was hard for the materially rich and those who thought they were religiously good to get there. It's easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for one of those to get there.
- This is not to say it's not sinful--just to say we often present it differently than the Bible does.
- **Listen: We only grasp the gospel when we understand**, as Paul did, that **we are the worst sinner we know** (1 Tim 1:15)—and **that if Jesus came to die for us**, there is no one that he would not die for.
- When you realize that, **you'll start loving your neighbor** as someone made in the **image of God** and feeling compassion for them in their weakness.
 - And you'll **treat them first and foremost like people who deserve compassion, not scorn or judgment or a political voting bloc** to be marginalized.
 - One of the **reasons that we stand against** any discrimination or bullying and will count ourselves among the fiercest advocates for dignity and rights to be extended to this community is because we recognize gay and lesbian people are just like us--made in the image of God and deserving of dignity and our respect.
 - They are not "them," they are "**we.**" *You should see in the face of every sinner a reflection of the corruption that afflicts your own heart; the fruit of the rebellion you have participated in.*
 - **Is that how you read Romans 1?**

3rd way we go wrong...

3. Assuming it's hard for LGBT people to get to heaven

- **Let me say something very clearly:** Homosexuality does not send you to hell.
- And **here's how I know that:** Being heterosexual doesn't send you to heaven.

- **What sends you to hell is refusing** to allow Jesus to be the Lord and center of your life, **regardless of how that manifests**--you're right to choose your sexual ethics, or your right to marry whomever you want; or your right to control your money; or your refusal to love people who aren't like you and use your strengths to serve them..
- **Rosaria Butterfield**, whose story I have told you before (*practicing lesbian, Prof of Literature and Women's Studies at Syracuse*), said that **Romans 1 brought her to Christ**.
 - The **pastor who led her to Christ refused** (at first) to argue about her lesbianism. He told her that according to Romans 1, the real issue was who got to call the shots in her life. How she defined herself. How she sought fulfillment.
 - **Romans 1, Rosaria explains, revealed my heart** to me. In Romans 1, she says, Paul shows us that we all go through what Eve went through in the Garden of Eden. We have to ask:
 - Who gets to declare what is good?
 - What is Lord in my life--my desires or God's word?
 - She says, "Homosexuality is not the core of our rebellion against God; a desire to be God is. A desire to be the one who gets to declare good and evil, 'play judge rather than be judged.' A desire to use God's creation for our own gratification rather than with pleasure, for his glory."¹⁰
 - And **that means that repentance for the gay or lesbian person** looks fundamentally the same as it does for the straight or religious person.
 - "God, I'm sorry for elevating my desires over your will.
 - I'm sorry for attempting to define my identity apart from your design for me.
 - I'm sorry for taking on myself the authority to declare what's good.

¹⁰ Rosaria Butterfield, *Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert*

- I'm sorry for seeking satisfaction in self-fulfillment rather than from giving glory to you.
- I recognize Jesus is Lord and turn over control to him."
- That's what repentance looks like for **a gay, straight, rich, poor, young, old, Jew, Gentile, black or white.**
- We all **come to Jesus in the same way.**
- The core sin for all of us is a desire to play God. Repentance looks fundamentally the same for us, as does salvation.
- The good news is that **Jesus came to save sinners.** ALL KINDS. It **matters not WHAT kind of sinner** you are, but what kind of Savior he is.

Bottom line here: *Paul's approach to homosexuality is neither what we'd call liberal nor classically conservative in our culture. He doesn't deny its sinfulness like a liberal nor does he elevate it as the chief of all sins like a conservative. He lists it as one of many examples of the corruptions that came from a society that has rejected God and replaced ourselves and our desires in the center where he belongs, a rebellion in which we have all alike participated equally.*

One more verse: 32 Although they know God's just sentence—that those who practice such things deserve to die—they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them.

Idolatry has produced the most horrendous sins throughout history--sins that we look back on and clearly see how corrupt they were, but **at the time were applauded.**

- **It was idolatry, for example, that drove some of the brutal conquests in history.** But at the time, the conquering warriors were lauded as heroes.
 - **Deep in their hearts** they knew it was wrong, but they lauded it anyway.
- **It was idolatry in our own country** that led to the unfair treatment of indigenous peoples or that fueled our nation's **horrendous history on slavery and oppression.**

- **Read our founding documents: Jefferson and many of our Founding Fathers** knew it was wrong but they rationalized it because it was too messy to fight it, or because they thought doing so would hurt the economy too much. Their **idolatry for power**, maintenance of the status quo and economic prosperity drove their complacency.
- **This is why many of the Christians who should have known better didn't speak up**, or even rationalized it.
 - **Some of the first slaves on American shores** came via a Dutch trader who arrived at Jamestown with 20 enslaved Africans taken from a Spanish slaver. **They had been baptized by the Spanish**, but the English would not enslave their brethren. Instead, they had them join the other 1000 indentured servants who would in time earn their freedom. But over the next **25–75 years the same English would change their mind** about the image of God in the African, and determine that they were suitable for chattel slavery.
 - Scholars say **this was driven by the recognition** of how slavery could lead to great economic gain.
 - We knew, but we didn't know, because we didn't want to know.
- **MLK was clear** that he **wasn't introducing some new truth** into our culture, but calling us to reckon with what we knew instinctively already to be true--what was in our very creed as Americans: that all men are created equal and endowed by their **Creator with certain inalienable rights** including life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness...
- **So we knew, but we didn't know**, because we didn't want to know--and thus we practiced it, and approved it, and institutionalized it.

We look back on these things now, and can see the corruption, and we say, "How can they have been so blind?"

But **we continue to practice the same idolatry**, and are equally blind to the corruption our idolatry fills our society with.

Last week was National Right to Life Sunday. **In many ways, at the bedrock of the the pro-choice agenda is a commitment to protect idolatry:** *I want to be the one, instead of God, who should be able to make the choice between life and death when it affects me.*

I pulled this off the PP site explaining their commitment to abortion:

"Everyone has their own unique and valid reasons for having an abortion. Some of the many different reasons people decide to end a pregnancy include:

- *They're not in a relationship with someone they want to have a baby with.*
- *It's not a good time in their life to have a baby.*
- *They want to finish school, focus on work, or achieve other goals before having a baby.*
- *They just don't want to be a parent.*"¹¹

Or this from John Piper: *"I took an abortionist out to lunch once, prepared to give him ten reasons why the unborn are human beings. He stopped me, and said, 'I know that. We are killing children.' I was stunned. He said, 'It's simply a matter of justice for women. It would be a greater evil to deny women the equal right of reproductive freedom."*

Which means women should be no more encumbered by the consequences of an unplanned pregnancy than men. ... We know what that means. We are killing children."¹²

I realize that many of you struggle with this, and are conflicted, and some even work in these places, and I understand why you are conflicted...

¹¹ <https://www.plannedparenthood.org/learn/abortion/considering-abortion>

¹² <https://www.desiringgod.org/articles/we-know-they-are-killing-children-all-of-us-know>

And I know we have women who have had abortions or who are currently experiencing an unplanned pregnancy, and I know that you are hurting. I don't want to make this any harder than it is... we are here for you.

I just want you to consider: **The only real question we have to consider in abortion is this:** Is the baby inside the womb a human life, made in the image of God? And, **if so, is it ever right to willfully take human life?**

- **Someone says: "My rights, my body."**
 - I agree. But the unborn child is not part of your body. The baby has her own DNA, her own brain waves, and her own blood type. It's **not part** of your body.
- **I've always believed that women and men should have control over their bodies.** Which is **why I have to be against elective abortion**, because it destroys an innocent female or male body without their consent.
 - People say, "Well, **what about rape and incest?**" Tragic and painful situation.
 - But... **is the child at fault** for how they got there? Are they not still made in the image of God... innocent human beings?
 - **What people mean by this question** is usually, "This baby came to me through one of the most painful and tragic events of my life. Why should I be **forced to bear the burden** of something that only reminds me that pain?"
 - And that **certainly is a heart-rending situation.**
 - But here's **the most important question:** *How does a civil and just society treat innocent human beings that remind us of painful events? By killing them? Could we do that with a two year old that reminds us of a painful event?*
 - Again, **the question is whether this is a human being** made in the image of God.
 - And **what about cases of babies** we know will be mentally disabled or have some kind of significant deformity? Are

they not still made in the image of God? If so, then they deserve our protection.

- **At the end of the day, the question is,**
 - “Do I get to be the Lord over life or do I let God?”
 - What should determine whether this baby lives or dies? My desires or the Creator’s designs?
- So **like I said, at the heart of this question** is the central issue Paul is pointing to, of idolatry: People want abortion to remain legal because they don’t want to relinquish my right to be lord instead of God.

And, **again, I know that some of you got in a bad situation** and you made a mistake and I want you to know there is forgiveness and healing for that--we don’t consider you a worse sinner than any of us and you can experience forgiveness like any of us...

I’m **just trying to show that the whole discussion** is undergirded by an unwillingness to trust God and do things his way.

- The other reason: **Pic**
- “That’s God’s design”

And, just like it was in the past, **we are willing to cover up or rationalize the worst injustices** to maintain this right.

- I **recently read an account of the intentional cover-up of the crimes** of Dr. Kermit Gosnell by the media. Dr. Gosnell ran an abortion clinic in PA. I know not all abortion clinics are like this, but that name should elicit the same shock and repulsion as Jeffrey Dahmer’s or Charles Manson. Yet most of us have never heard of him.
 - Gosnell was a Philadelphia abortionist who for more than a decade engaged in a pattern of horrifically cruel, sadistic behavior toward his patients-- mostly poor, minority women-- and their unborn children.
 - He carried out countless atrocities on both unborn babies and their mothers.
 - Gosnell habitually kept severed babies’ feet and beheaded fetuses as trophies.

- Regardless of one’s position on abortion, this should have attracted front-page, wall-to-wall attention from the start. But it didn’t.
- Why? Because as some reporters and editors later admitted, they were reluctant to cover any abortion-related story that might help the pro-life cause.
- Abortion-rights defenders and editors of publications like *The Atlantic* and *The Washington Post* have admitted fault in reporting the story. As one reporter admitted, she admitted she covered it might help the pro-life cause and she is committed to not doing anything that threatens her ability to choose.
- Even when the story was reported, it was often sanitized in order to downplay the egregious nature of Gosnell’s atrocities.
- “The Associated Press, ran a small article on it in which they recounted courtroom testimony describing a hundred-plus fetal beheadings, titled its story: “Staffer Describes Chaos at PA Abortion Clinic.”
 - The **analyst I was reading** said, “Imagine a school shooting reported under the headline: ‘Coach Disappointed over Premature End to Playoff Game.’ Or a deadly mine explosion summarized as: ‘Maintenance Crew Frustrated at Inadequate Working Conditions.’”¹³
 - As *USA Today’s* Kirsten Powers noted, the proper word for Gosnell’s activities is “infanticide.”¹⁴
- We **rationalize it, approve it, even applaud it.**
 - Some of you saw this week that the **NY State legislature** passed a bill approving abortion up to the very moment of birth. Can you tell me what the difference is between a baby 2 minutes before it is born and 2 minutes after? And **when they did the legislature applauded.**¹⁵
 - And **even if you are not sure:** “Maybe it’s not fully human in the womb.” Think of it like this. If you are out hunting and you see

¹³ Ben Sasse, *Them*, 96–98.

¹⁴ Ben Sasse, *Them*, p. 98

¹⁵ <https://www.faithwire.com/2019/01/23/new-york-senate-erupts-in-applause-after-passing-horrific-late-term-abortion-bill/>

something rustle in the bushes, but you are not sure what it is: it might be a deer, or it might be your friend... **what do you do?** Do you take the shot? No. Until you are 100% sure that it's not your friend, don't take the shot. If there's any question about whether the baby is a human, preserve life.

- Some of you are like: **Why talk about this?** It just feels political... an unnecessary distraction.
 - I know it's uncomfortable, but I'm trying to give you a **picture of how corrupt our hearts grow** when God is not in the center.
 - **We don't look at any of these people in judgment** and say, "What's wrong with them?" We say, "What's wrong with us?" **I've voluntarily participated** in the same idolatry that led to *that*, and I am **experiencing the same kinds of corruption** in my heart.
 - There's **truly no hope for any of us** but Jesus.
 - Which is what Paul wants us to see.

³² Although they know God's just sentence—that those who practice such things deserve to die—they not only do them, but even applaud others who practice them.

Paul is heading toward this conclusion in chapter 3, I'll go ahead and give it to you: **Romans 3:10**, "...There is no one righteous, not even one. 11 There is no one who understands; there is no one who (instinctively) seeks God. 12 All have turned away; all alike have become worthless. There is no one who does what is good, not even one. 13 (Our) Their throat is an open grave; they deceive with their tongues. Vipers' venom is under their lips. 14 Their mouth is full of cursing and bitterness. 15 Their feet are swift to shed blood; 16 ruin and wretchedness are in their paths... 23 For all have sinned, and fall short of the glory of God."

We **all stand** under judgment. Not just certain kinds of sinners--all of us.

Our **only hope** is Jesus.

In the gospel we discover that God is **not just a righteous God angered** by our sin, but a **merciful Father** who wanted to save us from it, who was **willing even to interject himself** into our place and suffer his wrath for us so that we could be spared.

- The **greatest truth of Romans**: The **righteousness of God revealed in the gospel** is not a standard by which he judges sinners, but a gift righteousness he offers to sinners by which he justifies them.

There is a fountain filled with blood, drawn from Emmanuel's veins
And sinners plunged beneath that blood, lose all their guilty stains

- Cleansing. For all
- We serve a **Savior who died** so he could make us whiter than snow and whose resurrection has the power to restore beauty from ashes.

The dying thief rejoiced to see that fountain in his day
And there may I, though vile as he, wash all my sins away

- Dying thief: murderer, blasphemer, filled with regrets
- I, though vile as he: we are all guilty of the rejection of God and idolatry that leads to corruption. It matters not what kind of sinner you are, but what kind of Savior he is.
- *There is a fountain...*