

God Gave Them Up

Rom. 1:18-32

Introduction:

1. All of us, in one way or another, are trying to make sense out of the universe.
2. We are all in the process of assembling information and trying to organize it into a systematic whole. It is the process of learning.
3. As we are learning some of the “truths” that we assemble do not seem to fit with our understanding of things. Sometimes we find these so-called “truths” to actually be false and so we discard them. Sometimes we just put them on the back burner and keep looking. We are putting together the pieces of our puzzle and we are not exactly sure where this piece fits or if it does.
4. We go through a similar process in our understanding of Scripture.
 - a. We assemble its various pieces.
 - b. Some fit in our greater understanding of things.
 - c. Some things we are uncertain about, not sure if they fit or not, or if our thinking about them needs to be modified. Maybe we have misinformation or misunderstand the information that we have. We just don’t know for sure.
5. My design in this lesson is to try to bring together some concepts about God’s power, God’s goodness, man’s free will and the consequences of sin including suffering and death.

Discussion:

- I. Throughout Scripture God is presented as exercising control over His creation, but it is not an absolute control. God has granted human beings the exercise of free choice. Human are not robots or automatons.
 - A. God’s control over His creation is known as His sovereignty.
 - B. I realize that there are theologies that deny that man has free choice. It is not my purpose in this study to address this issue. I am assuming that all my listeners already believe that humans have free choice.
 - C. The powerfulness (or sovereignty) of God raises a perennial questions. “If God is all powerful and He is good then why doesn’t He just eliminate all evil?” A related question is, “Why did God create man with the ability to choose evil and mess up the perfect creation in the first place?”
 - D. In one way or another these questions are dealing with God’s power, God’s goodness, man’s free will and the presence of evil into some harmony.
 1. We could address each of these truths. Is God all powerful? Is God really good? Does man have free will? Etc. but it is not my purpose to address whether or not these are truths? I am assuming that they are.
 2. It is my purpose to show how all of them fit together and interact in Scripture.
- II. The passage in Rom. 1:18-32 demonstrates this interaction.
 - A. The text refers to the wrath of God being revealed.
 1. Often people think of the wrath of God like they might refer to my anger which may be

- capricious and self-centered.
2. That is not God. His wrath against sin and sinners is reflective of His nature. Illustrated with paper in oven. The nature of the paper and the nature of the heat mean that combustion is inevitable with increased temperatures.
 3. But the fact that God's wrath is revealed against all ungodliness is reflective of His sovereign control and interaction with His creation.
 - a. He is expressing His wrath in opposition and judgment against sin.
 - b. The expression of this wrath comes as a direct result of man's choice in doing wrong.
- B. This text openly acknowledges man's ability to choose.
1. He made things evident.
 2. They are without excuse. It would be inappropriate to hold them accountable if they were mere robots/automatons. We do not hold machines accountable because they have no ability to choose.
 3. This passage says, "Even though they knew . . ."
 4. And adds, "Professing to be wise they exchanged . . ." All of this implies choice and responsibility.
 5. Throughout the text this stream of thought continues.
 - a. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie.
 - b. They did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer.
 - c. Although they know the ordinance of God . . .
 6. This passage assumes moral responsibility as the result of free choice. Rom. 2:5 refers to "your stubbornness and unrepentant heart," as the reason for men experiencing the wrath and righteous judgment of God.
- C. But there is something more in this text that reflects the interaction between God and free-choice humans. It is encapsulated in the phrase "God gave them up (over) . . ."
1. I take this to mean that God allowed them to do what they wanted to do.
 2. Again this is reflective of their free-choice, but it is also reflective of God's sovereignty. He can step aside and let them do what they choose, but He will hold them responsible.
 3. I think my dad related to me in much the same way. There would be something I wanted to do. We would talk it over and he would express his judgment. The answer was often, "No." But he would say, "You are going to do what you are going to do." I took that to mean, "You have a choice to make. You can either do what I said or do what you want." But I always knew that there were going to be consequences to whatever decision I made.
 4. Note what is said in Rom. 2:5-11. Verses 9-10 are particularly poignant. "There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good."

III. It is inappropriate to judge or to condemn God for the consequences of our sin.

- A. The responsibility rests with us.
- B. He is kind and tolerant and patient, trying to lead us to repentance so that we can escape the consequences of our sin (Rom. 2:4).
- C. While Romans indicates that we all sin, this is not to minimize it like we sometimes mean to do when we say, "I am only human." No sin is severe!!!!!! So severe in fact it requires the payment of death (Rom. 6:23).

D. But there is an alternative provided by God's grace, the sacrifice of the sinless for the sinners (Rom. 3:12-26).

1. At first glance we might say, "Awesome!"
2. Other's might say, "What kind of God is it that kills His Son for the benefit of sinners?"
 - a. It is a God who takes our pain upon Himself. This is something we may not understand. The Father did not throw His Son on the grenade, as if to avoid throwing Himself on it. He threw Himself on the grenade to save us. Deity gave His own life for us.
 - b. Judge Him if you must but He was not acting to give up someone else's life for you. He gave up His own life for you!

IV. Now I could end the lesson at this point and it would be a sufficient and complete thought, but I have been reading from Lamentations and there are some things there that I would like to share with you

A. Lamentations was written by Jeremiah.

1. Jeremiah prophesied during the reigns of kings Josiah, Jehoiakim and Zedekiah until the exile of Jerusalem into Babylonian Captivity (Jer. 1:1-3).
2. Judah had rebelled against the instruction of God.
3. She is described as a faithless wife, an adulteress, who continued in her rebellion. She is described as turning away in continual apostasy (8:5).
4. Even though God appealed to her, graciously inviting her repentance and extending forgiveness. They rejected Jeremiah's message and threw him into a cistern filled with mud.
5. In Jer. 12:7 God said, "I have forsaken My house, I have abandoned My inheritance; I have given the beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies."

B. When you read about what happened when the Babylonians took control of Jerusalem you cannot help but grieve over their circumstances. Death and destruction overwhelmed them. They were starving inside the city. When the Babylonians broke through the wall the sons of king Zedekiah were slaughtered before his eyes. Then his eyes were put out, and he was bound with bronze fetters and carried into Babylon in humiliation. Ruthlessly the Babylonians struck down and put to death.

C. Lamentations is a book of grief over Israel's circumstances.

1. Jeremiah experienced the affliction. Read 3:1-18.
2. Still he recognized God's lovingkindness (3:19ff) and knew that God would redeem them.
3. In all of this tragedy we gain insight into what happens when God gives us up to our own ways.

D. But alas, the consequences of sin are not always immediate and men set their hearts on doing evil thinking they can escape the consequences of sin.

1. God's sovereignty reigns.
2. Man makes his choice.
3. God delivers those who seek Him and allows those who do not to accept the responsibility for their own sin, as tragic as that may be.
4. You see, we are all dead and dying already. We tend to think we are alive and God is putting to death, but in fact we are dead and it is only by the grace of God that we have

- the opportunity to be rescued from death.
5. Some see God as dangling us over hell. The fact is we are already there. He is offering us an escape. Only by His grace do we have this reprieve, this temporary existence and opportunity to choose life.

Conclusion:

1. Lamentations 3:31-33 says, "The Lord will not cast off forever, but, though he cause grief, he will have compassion according to the abundance of his steadfast love; for he does not willingly afflict or grieve the children of men."
2. Let us return to the Lord for He has redeemed us with the blood of His Son.