

## **WHY THE GOSPEL IS NEEDED**

### **Romans 1:18–32**

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Romans 1:18–32 (NIV)

“The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another. They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen. Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done. They have become filled with every kind of wickedness, evil, greed and depravity. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit and malice. They are gossips, slanderers, God-haters, insolent, arrogant and boastful; they invent ways of doing evil; they

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disobey their parents; they are senseless, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.”

Paul proceeds to give the diagnosis of the human condition. In this passage, the human condition has had no acquaintance with the God of the Scripture, no acquaintance with the sacred writings.

He is reading the nature of his time, and indeed a good segment of our age as well. In chapter 2 he will talk about the diagnosis of the human condition as it applies to the religious person—the good person—who is not marked by the flagrant kinds of sins which are noted in chapter 1, but which are nevertheless for the religious man, very real obstacles which separate him from God.

In chapter 3 he will conclude, branching together all men—both the heathen world and the religious world—into that observation: “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.”

When the diagnosis of the human condition is complete, Paul can go on in the Book of Romans after 3:23 to present the remedy. But, just as when you go into a doctor's office, he first tries to find out what's wrong before he prescribes the medicine in these verses before us. He's really answering the question: “Why is the gospel needed?” He makes three statements about why the gospel is needed.

#### **I. The gospel is needed because people don't know God.**

Whenever we read these verses (1:18–32), if we separate them from the rest of the letter to the Romans, we get the impression that the world is without hope. After all, it is said in this passage, “God gave them up.” But we must remember that statement in light of the totality of the theme of Romans. It is the very people whom God has given up who, through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, are offered salvation through the Cross and through the Resurrection. We'll see how Paul links these things together as we go through the Book of Romans. But unless a person

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is motivated to understand that, really, outside of the gospel of Jesus Christ there is an inability to have a relationship with God, there's a true lostness. Then one cannot appreciate what is being said here.

What do you do with people who have no familiarity with the Scripture in Paul's day or today? Are people really to blame because they do not know God? This is the charge that Paul makes in verse 20, especially: "Ever since the creation of the world, his invisible power and deity has been manifest in the things created." Are people to blame, or is God to blame for the condition of persons not knowing Him?

Two things must happen if communication is to be made. There must be someone giving the communication and there must be someone listening to the communication. So arriving at the consideration of who is to blame for the world's not knowing God, the question must be then raised: Is it the communicator, or is it the listener? Paul squarely says God is not to blame for the losses of the world. Here we see the real distinction between the Christian understanding of the nature of man and the modern understanding revealed in the philosophy of evolution. Evolution essentially says that man started low and is rising higher. Whereas the Scriptures say man started high and has been on a downward fall. Man started high with a knowledge of God, his eternal deity, and power, but exchanged the truth of God for a lie.

Paul is saying that even without the benefit of the Scriptures, one can know something about God. Namely, God is powerful, has eternal power, and God has deity. That is, He is greater than—He is different than—man. He is on a higher level of being.

How can we be sure of this in the natural order? If we look at creation itself, Paul is saying we'll come to understand that God exists. The author of *Faith That Makes Sense* talks about how if you just look at the world as it is, one can begin to arrive at some conclusions that this could not

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have happened all by chance. He says, "A pilot came to me in my tent office in New Guinea and said, 'Tell me, chaplain, why is any man compelled to hold a religious faith? Could not everything have happened by chance?' I asked him jokingly what he knew about chance. He told me with a grin that he was an expert. So I took out a coin and tossed it and asked him if it were heads or tails. He replied 'Heads.' 'Now tell me,' I asked, 'What is the chance of getting Heads?' He suggested one out of two. When I asked him why that proportion, he replied that each one possessed only two sides, heads and tails. Therefore, it had to be one or the other. 'What,' said I, 'is the chance of getting two heads in succession?' He replied, 'One out of four.' For three heads in succession, he replied one out of eight because it was a multiplied chance. 'That's right,' I agreed. 'It's the probability of the first occasion, multiplied by the probability of the second, multiplied by that of the third. What do you know about dice?' I asked him. He grinned knowingly. So I added, 'What is the chance of getting a six when you role dice?' 'One out of six,' he replied. For two sixes in succession, he suggested one out of thirty-six, and for three sixes in succession, he suggested one out of 216. Then for four sixes in succession, he estimated quickly 1,296. Then I asked him the chances of getting twelve sixes in succession. He allowed me to supply an answer. One out of 2,176,782,336. 'What,' said I, 'do you think the chance may be of getting dice to roll the same way all the time?' 'What? That's fantastic!' 'Exactly,' I rejoined. 'Yet you talk about chance to explain the origins of our complex universe.'"

Carl Olsen, in a little article called "What Is Man?" talks about the complexity of the human life: "In conception, the human sperm and the human ovary unite and in that union the payload is a data system containing the entire program of possibilities for the physical, intellectual, psychic and spiritual life of a human being. According to the best estimates, that data system has no less

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than ten billion separate entries of information. Ten billion separate pieces of data. If printed out, this information would require at least one thousand volumes of five hundred pages each.”

Now comes the shocker. That whole data system, that library of information with its billions of complexly-related messages, is contained in so minute a space that it is invisible to any but the most sensitive electron microscopes. The naked eye can detect an object one-tenth of a millimeter in diameter. But the space that Carl Wilson speaks of is only one-fiftieth of a millimeter in diameter.

All of this by chance? Evolution needs time and chance in order for its theories to be accurate.

But the Scripture stands in distinction and says if man truly uses his mentality and does not lie or become senseless, he cannot arrive at the conclusion that things as they are happened by chance.

Life is simply too complex. Better to go away and look at a Boeing 747, which is far less complex than a human being, and say, “It all happened by chance. One day there was an explosion at Lockheed and out came this 747.”

In this world, Christians are among the very few people who are like the little boy in the children’s story “The Emperor’s New Clothes.” Remember the emperor who got the fancy new tailor who was making him a marvelous new suit of clothes, albeit an invisible suit of clothes, but richly embroidered and decorated? All the king’s subjects stood in awe the great day when the emperor would model in a parade the new clothes which had been made him by the tailor.

The whole parade is interrupted by a little boy standing on the sidelines. He looks up at his mommy and says, “But mommy! The emperor is naked!” The only one with the courage to declare the truth. When we look at all the kinds of explanations that may be given for why life in its complexity exists, the Christian with the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is like that little boy, saying amidst all the academia and all of the incredible, fancy theories—which basically reduce

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down to time and chance—alone the Christian emphatically is saying in this world, “The theory is naked. It’s foolishness. It’s senseless. What appears to be wisdom to the world is in fact folly and stupidity.”

So Paul is saying God has sufficiently revealed himself in the things which have been made in terms of the power that it took to make them. So at least this should have been perceived, but man is not listening.

Indeed, outside the gospel men do not know God. And Paul notes especially the steps away from God that are taken in this listening process. It begins with a lack of respect and gratitude toward God. They don’t recognize God (verse 21). They knew God, but they did not honor Him (that’s respect) or give thanks to Him (that’s gratitude). Lack of respect and lack of gratitude.

I would suggest that in human relationships if you lack respect and you lack gratitude, human relationships cannot fall together. If I treat my wife without respect and if I never say any thanks to her for anything she’s ever done, after a while she’s going to become discouraged living with me. In relationships between children and parents, relationships in the church, relationships of any kind, take away those fundamental aspects of respect and gratitude and a relationship cannot exist. Since the Scriptures present God not as an idea, but God as a Person, these same elements go into making our relationship with Him. Take away the respect and the gratitude, and the fellowship is withdrawn.

This lack of respect and gratitude is made known in our world in so many ways that one hardly wants to begin to belabor it. We especially show this in the modern world, substituting for the name God terms like “Fate,” and “Mother Nature,” and “The Man Upstairs,” while strikingly not using those same terms to swear. We omit God’s name for the want of other terms, but when it comes to swearing, no one says, for example, “Mother Nature!” and then attaches some swear

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word to it. Or “Fate!” and then attaches some word to it. The employment of the name of God in this way is characteristic of taking away respect and gratitude.

Once this starts, then there is the exile or the abandonment of God from life so that “they become futile in their thinking and their senseless minds are darkened. Claiming to be wise, they become fools and exchange the glory of the immortal God for images” (Romans 1:22-23). The images which are made are first the images of man, then the images of beasts. It is the worship of man, whether it is a physical image which is made or whether an imagination which is the making of an image in a mental sense. It is saying on man’s part, “I’m right. My ideas. My speculations. My morals. My ethics. These are right. Don’t give me a system that comes from outside. Don’t give me revelation. I can get along with what I’ve got.”

When we got on a bus in the city of Brussels, we met a man with his son who was traveling also. He was from Scotland. We were trading back and forth what we did as a profession. As we got off the bus, he made kind of a parting comment about us because we had identified ourselves as being religious writers. He had also said he was a writer, a historian. He said, “Religion is popular in America, but it’s rather out of style here, out of fashion.” It is this kind of a tip-off of feeling that there is an exile or banishment of God from life. It’s the worship of man.

From that, Paul says, man descends to the worship of animals. We don’t see people going around making images in our culture of animals. But we do see an animalism that is reflected in our culture in various strains. I would note one, especially, that has emerged: funk rock, which has recently begun in England and also in certain parts of the United States. Kind of a manifestation of music and culture that gradually just keeps going down until essentially what you have is a group of young kids on the stage who want to show how mean, foul, nasty, vulgar they can be.

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It's affected how they look, what they sing, and what they say. Animalism. The exile and abandonment of God in life.

Life is full of visual images we can give ourselves to—images of success or youth or beauty or comfort or financial security or sex or power or adventure—things we can strive for more than God. Like the prodigal son, the world is attempting to spend resources which the Father has given, without the Father being there. Spend the resources of mind and spirit and body without the Father's approval.

This sliding away from the knowledge of God, which begins with a lack of respect and gratitude, descends to an abandonment of God from life through the worship of images, finally comes about in the complete suppression of the truth. Paul specifically indicates that they hold down the truth (verse 18). By their wickedness, they suppress it. This is what happens every time an invitation is given to respond to Jesus Christ—that there is a false spirit, a contrary spirit, which rises in the heart which says “Don't do it! Hold the truth down.” False images are an affront to God. So the images which are served—whether they are of mind or metal or wood—are a character of God and an affront and insult to Him. One which, when He sees, He withdraws His presence.

Remember the time when you were in school and the teacher would go out of the room, and maybe you would slip out of your desk to the chalkboard and draw a little, oval face and put some mean, little things in it, and put underneath it the label, “This is Teacher”? It's a way of drawing a character to insult someone. Or when you really don't like someone, make an image of that person and hang that individual in effigy to show your contempt. This is what Paul says the world is doing to God through its false understandings of Him. Therefore, the conclusion must be reached: Outside the gospel, people do not really know God.

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#### **II. The second thing that Paul says in this passage about the lack of knowing God is that outside the gospel, God then has abandoned mankind.**

In verses 24, 26, and 28, three separate paragraphs, Paul uses the phrase “God gave them up” as a way of saying that man is now allowed by God to enjoy the horrible freedom he has demanded, and has therefore become self-enslaved in his freedom. The result of the freedom he has sought is an ungodliness and an unrighteousness. That is a lack of respect and understanding and relationship to God, mingled with a failure to be righteous in his dealings with other men. It comes out in very small ways, and it comes out in very large ways. In the workaday business world which we live in—in which people cut corners and do things which the Christian looks askance at, and with his finely-tuned sense of conscious which comes from the Holy Spirit says, “That is unrighteousness!”

**A.** Paul goes through this abandonment which goes on in respect to God’s giving up on mankind. He notes that the first stage in abandonment is sexual immorality (verse 24). God gave them up to the lusts of their hearts, to impurity, and to the desiring of body among themselves. Probably a reason why the first trait of society that God has abandoned would come in the form of looseness in morals is not because immorality is the most heinous sin available. It is rather the most frequent sin to be easily and readily seen because it is the most, from the human standpoint, pleasurable sin.

Sin kind of proceeds along this basis. You take it. Sin comes in a way that it is to be reached by the senses. It can be felt or touched or seen or heard. For a while, it is enjoyable and pleasurable and, therefore, rather widespread. But after a while, it demands more than it gives in return. An indication of a society which is being abandoned by God is a society in which God has simply allowed the restraints of morality to be removed. There follows, then, the substitution of a man-

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made moral code which rejects what the Scripture's saying about the use of the body and about fornication and adultery and other sexual wrongs.

This sexual immorality Paul associates, also, with the need of man to worship. Because he specifically notes that they exchanged the truth of God for a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the One who created. So that sexual immorality has associated with it a form of worship, a desire to adore and to be adored, a desire which can only be truly fulfilled, first of all, in relationship to God. This widespread sexual immorality—which is present in not only first century culture, but present in ours—is simply a tip-off of worse things yet to come. When a society loosens its restraints in this area or when an individual person loosens their restraints in this area, it is at the beginning of a slide to other things.

C. S. Lewis, I think is quite rightly, noted that some have misunderstood Christians as saying that sexual immorality is the supreme vice. He goes on to note that in Scripture, this is not the case.

The sins of the flesh, he says, are bad, but they are the least bad of all sins. All the worst pleasures are purely spiritual: the pleasure of putting other people in the wrong, of backbiting, the pleasures of power, hatred. The two things which wrestle against the godly-self developing in us are the animal self and the diabolical self. The animal self involves the pleasures, the life of the flesh. But the diabolical self is the worst of the two. It is that which is Satanic, who is lifted up with pride, a spiritual matter. That is why C. S. Lewis notes a cold and self righteous prig that goes regularly to church may be far nearer to hell than a prostitute. But of course, it's better to be neither.

Paul, in discussing this slide into sexual immorality, is really saying, "Watch that in society. It's a tip-off to the fact that God is removing restraints and letting people taste the fruit of the seeds they have sown, and they're going to experience bitter fruit as they taste it."

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**B.** The next descent is into sexual perversion (verses 26 through 27). In a secular society and in a godless church, the restraints are being removed from homosexual activity so that in society today, and even in some forms of the church, there is now believed no hope for the homosexual to change. Within the Episcopal church this last week, a woman was ordained to the priesthood who is a confessed lesbian. What is happening within society and within some aspects of the church is that people are saying toward homosexuality that it is justified by heredity or by environment. That one need no longer seek the removal of guilt, but rather treat it as a sickness and move from that to treat it as an alternative lifestyle. Finally, it becomes publicly accepted so that it no longer is a crime, but a legal right. No longer something which is a victimless wrong, but simply something which is to be treated as normal. God keeps removing the restraints in order that sin might be manifest in all of its horror to the individual which is involved. On the one hand, we abhor the sin of homosexuality as well as the other sexual sins which are noted in Scripture. There must be within the Church that understanding that outside of the gospel, the homosexual is really abandoned. Society isn't helping him or her change. And the Church, in many parts of its relationship, is not helping and is not demanding change. Only in the gospel of Jesus Christ is there yet that conviction that wrong is being committed. Only in the gospel is the possibility for repentance. And only in the gospel is the prospect of deliverance. So it is the gospel that must be seen. For the person trapped in lesbianism or homosexuality, in the gospel it must be seen not simply as the condemnatory word of God against the sin that's there. But also the word of hope which likewise comes and says, "This is the power of God to salvation." If any within this congregation have wrestled with homosexuality, I would suggest that you read this book by Pat Boone called "Joy," a most remarkable book which brought tears to my eyes many times as I read it. The story of a young lesbian woman who writes Pat Boone with this

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deep struggle in her life of being unable to be free from sexual bondage. Through this course of letters, and through a rather unique leading of the Spirit, this person comes to a remarkable deliverance and freedom in the Lord.

C. The third process in abandonment that occurs is sickness in society that is pervasive. Verses 28 through 32 speak of this abandonment as a real, total sickness. It is marked by a reprobate mind and improper conduct, or a base mind. To have a reprobate or base mind means a mind that is not approved. It is a mind that, in reality, has flunked the test—and morals that do not match God's standards.

Paul, in this particular passage, uses twenty-one terms to describe the breaking loose of restraints in society—terms which we could spend a long time just trying to define. I think most of them are rather self-evident as to their meaning. One especially strikes me to comment on. That is verse 31, the next-to-the-last word which is used to describe society: "heartless." Or to put it another way: without natural affection.

Historians at the time that Paul lived and wrote said that in the city of Rome thirty to forty children were left every night in the Forum, abandoned by their parents. Seneca, the Roman historian, said about mentally-retarded children in that period: "We kill a mad dog, we slaughter a fierce ox, we plunge a knife into sickly cattle lest they taint the herd. Children who are born weakly and deformed, we drown." Heartless. Without natural affection.

One truly sees this in our society today with the avalanche of abortion, which is becoming, if it hasn't already become, the number one cause of death in American society. When we use the term "abortion," we think—like all terms like it—in the abstract form. But when we think of the individual choice of a person who has a child within that is willingly and voluntarily ready to destroy that child for no other reason than simply that child is not convenient, one has to

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recollect that that is a part of society from which restraints are being removed. We are seeing “without natural affection.”

John Newton, the writer of the hymn “Amazing Grace,” describes in his chronicles of slave trading how in one slave ship he witnessed an event where a sailor got disturbed by a baby that was crying on the deck of the ship and he told the mother very sternly that she should shut that baby up. After a while the baby hadn’t quieted down, and the sailor took the baby and just heaved it over the deck of the ship into the ocean waters. I can talk about slavery and think about it, but somehow it never becomes as real to me as if I just isolate on that one concrete incident of what happens to an individual as a result of slavery. A heartless kind of a world. A world in which God has been abandoned and, therefore, God has abandoned mankind.

**D.** All this abandonment, Paul says, is marked by something even more heinous in form (verse 32). “Though they know God’s decree that those who do such things deserve to die [that is to say, God has written His moral law on the heart] they not only do these things but approve those who practice them.” We see within our society a move to build a climate of acceptance towards certain things, a climate of acceptance in the media and in the arts and in education and in politics towards homosexuality, toward abortion, toward perversions, toward sexual immorality. We are a society which increasingly becomes one in which restraints are removed.

God abandons man outside the gospel and leaves them to their own devices. This then brings a third kind of a theme that Paul works in these passages. A way of saying that now upon man abides the wrath of God. Because men have refused to know God and men have suppressed the knowledge of God and been abandoned by God, God’s wrath rests upon them. That’s the theme statement of verse 18: “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven.” What is this wrath of God? We sometimes think of it exclusively as being related to the future, when God visits in

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judgment the world with His wrath. Or we think of it in terms of this thunderbolt or lightning quality. God is going to zap the person who does wrong. But here in this context it's not that at all. The wrath of God is something that is presently happening. It is being revealed. It is being revealed in this sense that God is allowing evil in the invisible and moral sense, allowing it to exist. So He is forcing men to live with the consequences of their choices. He is not suspending the fruit of the seed which has been sown. If one breaks the laws of agriculture, the harvest fails. If one breaks the laws of architecture, the building collapses. If one breaks the laws of human health, the body suffers. If one breaks God's laws in respect to morality, then as well suffering is the result. We see this in various ways, how the wrath of God rests upon whole societies.

I think, for example, of India, where cows are regarded as more sacred than children. God allows that society to live with the consequences of its decisions and to have famine in the land because its values are perverted and wrong. It is a manifestation of the wrath of God as really an almost impersonal force. America brought slaves to its shores three centuries ago. Have we ever stopped living with the consequences of what a past generation did? It is a manifestation of the wrath of God that He causes us to eat the fruit of the seed that we have sown. In the individual life if we seek sex and not love, God then allows us—and indeed makes us—live with our choice. If we seek self and not God, then God allows us to live with ourselves and find out really how empty and vain that is. If we seek things and not relationships, then God indeed may give us things and will not allow us relationships.

What Paul is simply saying from a broken heart is that indeed, outside of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the world is under the wrath of God. It is working with the inevitable laws of reaping and harvest.

**III. But there's another story.**

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Here we have to kind of leap ahead to what Paul will say in Romans. The letter to the Romans was read all in one sitting. We're not taking the time to read it all in one sitting, and I wouldn't want to leave you just with verse 32 and say, "There is no hope!" The theme of this whole letter is that to persons who have been abandoned by God and persons under the wrath of God and to persons who have themselves abandoned God, there is good news. Because only in the gospel of Jesus Christ is there a chance to be reconciled with God.

A modern writer, who himself never became reconciled to God as far as they know, said this in a prayer to Christ: "Come down, o Christ, and help me. Reach thy hand, for I am drowning in a stormier sea than Simon on the Lake of Galilee. The wine of life has spilled upon the sand. My heart is as some famine-murdered land, whence all good things have perished utterly and well. I know my soul in hell must lie, if I this night before God's throne should stand." To such a response, Paul, in the letter to the Corinthians will say, "Do not be deceived. Neither the immoral nor the idolater nor adulterers nor homosexuals or thieves or greedy or drunkards nor revelers nor robbers will inherit the kingdom of God. But such were some of you." I think that's the key. In the church of Corinth as well as in the church at Rome, there were persons who had been immoral; persons who had practiced idolatry; persons who had been adulterers; persons who were homosexuals; persons who were thieves; persons who were greedy; who had been drunkards. But now in Jesus Christ, a new creation has begun. Old things have passed away and the new has come. There is no salvation outside of the gospel. No lasting change. No reconciliation with God and with self and with others. It is only the gospel that provides us this. So the gospel shows us our condemnation in order that we might glory in the salvation which God has provided us.

### **Closing Prayer**

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We read a list like this, Lord, and we may not be so overly affected by it if we have never ourselves committed some of what the world regards as the grosser passions that are noted in this. We may be tempted to have a kind of sense of smugness if we have never been even tested with the temptation of homosexuality and look at persons who have as though they were in worse position than we and could never come to God as easily as we have. But today, Lord—whether we count ourselves as religious people or whether we fall under the category of the flagrant sins of the spirit and body which are noted in this passage—we would take our stand with the Apostle Paul, who as a Jew had lived very morally, but whose religion had taken him nowhere in his relationship to You. And who cried out, therefore, in his travail that he was the chiefest of sinners. Lord, we know that real deliverance can only come not by simply condemning the person, but by loving the person as well. We know that You have condemned our sin in order to love us as an individual. It may be, Lord, that there are people here today that are kind of trapped in a room with great chains of bondage around them and the light of Your presence comes into that room. Their initial reaction is to go further and further into a corner to flee from the light. But Lord Jesus, let the light of Your Spirit move as a searchlight or flashlight upon that heart and life, and may they—as well as all of us who have had this experience—find that those who love You will come to the light and that You will abandon no one unless that person desires to be abandoned of You. You will receive all who will come to You and will not cast out any single person. So Lord Jesus, let each person in this room today know of Your deep and abiding love for them as people, as individuals for whom You died. Help them to realize that outside of You there is no hope for salvation and no hope for deliverance from the things they're going through.

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Beyond this prayer for the individual, I pray for us as a church that we will have a deep love for the people who are abandoned in this world outside the gospel. We look at our small church, this lighthouse in this community among others, and we pray, Lord Jesus, that we would be quickened to our task and be sensitive to the need in our hearts to reach out. Lord, I'm especially today concerned for this rampant sin within our society of homosexuality. Lord, the church has done so much condemning of the homosexual and the lesbian that many times they feel that within the church itself there is no hope, no possibility of ever being restored, that this will always be held against them and they'll never have a chance to be redeemed and be new in the Lord Jesus Christ. I pray that within this church it would be a different story. That within our hearts there will be an understanding and a love which will win the person who has been afflicted with the most terrible sexual bondage, the most gross sexual bondage. That they will be released and set free and made to understand that Your love and Your grace is not only Yours, but it is the body of Christ as well. Let there be a heart for people who are suffering, even as You have had a heart for the suffering world. And on the one hand, your justice abandoned the world. And on the other hand, Your love and your mercy reached through Jesus Christ to save the world from its sins. Lord, we ask these things in Your Name. Through Jesus our Lord. Amen.