

ROMANS – LIVING BY FAITH
GOD’S RIGHTEOUSNESS & MAN’S REBELLION – Chapters 1-3

LESSON 6 – DOES GOD ABANDON ANYONE? – Romans 1:24-32

As discussed in many of our earlier Bible studies, much of Scripture is open to our interpretation and there are really very few things that we absolutely must agree on...those being what is necessary for salvation. This lesson is going to be a hands-on demonstration of this very thing.

The basis for our study in Roman comes from Dr. David Jeremiah’s study guide Living By Faith – The Book of Romans. I am going to use this lesson not only to try and help you understand this section of Romans 1 but also to illustrate that we can...and will...sometimes not agree on everything we read and study in the Bible.

I’m going to quote some of the material from Dr. Jeremiah’s lesson and then contrast that with my own interpretation of what I believe Paul is teaching here. I challenge you to study and come to your own conclusion as to where you stand. Never just take my word...or anyone else’s word as gospel. So with that said...here we go...

Some interpret this section of Romans to mean that a person can become so evil that God will abandon them...write them off...put them on a “Do Not Save” list.

“Since the beginning of time, man has been trying to get rid of God – and in Romans 1:24-32 we discover that sometimes God grants that wish. Paul says that God **abandons** man in three areas: idolatry, immorality and iniquity. The natural consequences of man’s choices in these areas lead him ultimately away from God.”

Keep in mind that in Romans 1, Paul is talking about people who are not Christians.

Abandon – To give up completely; renounce, disown, discard...

Verse 18 of Romans 1 tells us, “The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of people.”

When is God’s wrath going to be revealed from heaven?

During the Great Tribulation described in Revelation.

So if Dr. Jeremiah in his study guide were to specify the Second Coming of Christ as that time of abandonment, then I could see that and agree with it. However, this distinction is not made and the opinion given is that an individual can become so evil and sinful that God will abandon them.

The issue with this interpretation of Scripture is that it is unsupported by other Scripture. I was not able to find an example from the Bible where God focused on a single individual and told them they could not be saved.

We do however, see examples where God has reached His limit with groups of people...and this will happen again at the end of the Great Tribulation.

- The people of Noah’s day

Genesis 6:5-7 “The Lord saw how great the wickedness of the human race had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the

time. The Lord regretted that he had made human beings on the earth, and his heart was deeply troubled. So the Lord said, I will wipe from the face of the earth the human race I have created.”

- The people of Sodom and Gomorrah

Genesis 18:20-21 “The Lord said, the outcry against Sodom and Gomorrah is so great and their sin so grievous that I will go down and see if what they have done is as bad as the outcry that has reached me. If not, I will know.”

- The people at the end of the Great Tribulation

2 Peter 3:10-12 “But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything done in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat.”

It seems to be clear that God has limits on how long his invitation of salvation will be extended but it also seems clear that His invitation is extended to everyone and then withdrawn from everyone. There doesn't seem to be Biblical evidence to say that any single person can become so sinful and wicked that God won't save them. In fact, Scripture seems to teach us just the opposite.

John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”

2 Peter 3:9, “The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.”

1 Timothy 2:1-6 “I urge, then, first of all, that petitions, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for all people – for kings and all those in authority, that we may live peaceful and quiet lives in all godliness and holiness. This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all people to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth. For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus, who gave himself as a ransom for all people.”

Even Paul said this earlier in Romans 1, “For I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God that brings salvation to everyone who believes...”

Ok...so what about the statements in verses 24-28, “God gave them over?”

Remember last week we discussed some of these verses and how there was this downward spiral that began with idolatry and continued to manifest itself through immorality?

In verses 21-23 we see the refusal to glorify and give thanks to God and the worshipping of the created things. This idolatry breaks the first three of God's 10 commandments.

Without God in His proper place, the resulting immorality that follows idolatry violates the remainder of God's law. We see the evidence of this starting in verse 29...

“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 disobey their parents; they have no understanding, no fidelity, no

love, no mercy. 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."

God gave them over to their sinful desires...shameful lusts...and a depraved mind...

What a terrible place to end up!

Let me give you a couple more quotes from Dr. Jeremiah's study guide...

"Paul enumerates many forms of iniquity which, when practiced and pursued, can lead to abandonment by God."

"As men rejected the knowledge of God from their minds, God gave them over to a depraved mind, one without distinctions between right and wrong."

Depraved – Morally corrupt; wicked

There is nothing in this Scripture that seems to indicate that God removes the ability for people to be able to distinguish right and wrong.

Paul's list in verses 29 and 30 is not meant to be an exhaustive list of sins. Paul is just giving examples of things that people end up doing as a result of this downward spiral of immorality.

Paul's description seems to be an accurate portrayal of what is happening in our society today. Some are abandoning themselves to every conceivable vice and dragging others down with them. Some are no longer trying to fight against evil practices but are trying to justify and present them as normal. Even Christians are becoming acclimated to and accepting of sins that at one time would not have been tolerated.

So does this mean that the God Who loved us so much...that gave His only Son for us might reach a point in His dealings with someone that He will go no further with them? Does God ever really give up on someone?

Not completely. God gives up to the degree the father gave up on his prodigal son. Sadly...He allows people to go their own selfish way but is always waiting for them to turn to Him and be saved.

Here's the challenge...

If God never gives up, then neither should we. We may no longer be able to contact someone directly with the Gospel, but our hearts should reach out to them in loving prayer...longing for the day when God's love gets through.