We left off in our last Romans study with Paul saying...

29 They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. 32 Though they know God's decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Romans 1:29-32

and before he laid out all these sins on a silver platter he began with...

24 Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 25 because they exchanged the truth about God for a lie and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever! Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 27 and the men likewise gave up natural relations with women and were consumed with passion for one another, men committing shameless acts with men and receiving in themselves the due penalty for their error. 28 And since they did not see fit to acknowledge God, God gave them up to a debased mind to do what ought not to be done.

Romans 1:24-28

We determined in our latest studies that these passages are *about* non regenerate mankind. Not Christians. But Paul certainly writes these things *to and for* Christians for a purpose. Understanding sin is part of the gospel. And the better we understand sin, the more we not only understand grace at a deeper level, but the more we can live by grace and experience true thankfulness to our heavenly father.

We learned from Paul that when separated from Yahweh, man becomes consumed in sin. There is no true peace, love fulfillment apart from the Lord. Only temporary satisfaction through sin that always leads to ruin and death.

When the Lord is not in the life of man, he naturally turns to himself or herself for guidance.

Christians have a superior alternative to turn to don’t we? We have a higher calling. Yahweh is our God now!

But in order to fully appreciate this and be guided in the right direction Paul does not hold back on teaching sin. We need to know darkness before we can see light.

Did you know that this is not the only letter that Paul uses this approach?

Let’s look at some other examples so we can gain an even better idea of the apostle Paul’s view on sin...

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident: sexual immorality, impurity, sensuality, 20 idolatry, sorcery, enmity, strife, jealousy, fits of anger, rivalries, dissensions, divisions, 21 envy, drunkenness, orgies, and things like these. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5:19-21

In our Romans passage we read that because of their unbelief Yahweh handed people over to sin.

Q. Would you say the handing over to sin in Romans is similar or the same as not inheriting the kingdom of God in this passage?

Q. So in this passage, are those who will not inherit the kingdom of God Christians?

Q. Why does Paul refer to to sinners as godless people? Think about our Romans passage and what happened when mankind rejected the Lord…

Q. So does Paul again refer to non regenerate man here?

Q. Is it not scary to imagine that many Christian doctrines apply these passages directly to Christians?

Q. If these behaviors come from godless people, do we want to allow them into our lives?

Before writing this, Paul wrote…

16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do.

Galatians 5:16-17

And then, to remind them of grace he adds...

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law.

Galatians 5:18

Q. When we see ourselves falling into godless behavior or temptation, what would Paul recommend?

Q. What do you believe it means to “walk by the Spirit”?

Q. If rejecting God causes mankind to become consumed in sin as we read in Romans, what is the solution?

Q. Do we not have a similar solution to sin as Christians in our daily lives?

Paul writes again on sin in his letter to the Corinthian church...

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: neither the sexually immoral, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor men who practice homosexuality, 10 nor thieves, nor the greedy, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God.

I Corinthians 6:9-10

It is important to realize that Paul is writing to Christians about these things.

Q. Why does Paul keep telling Christians about godless people and their behavior?

Q. Why might Paul want them to understand that those people will not inherit the kingdom of God?

1. To help them understand that they have been set apart from those things.

2. So they realize that godless people need the Lord.

3. So they realize the damaging consequence of not walking by the Spirit.

We often will see this passage quoted leaving out the next part….

11 And such were some of you. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

I Corinthians 6:11

Unlike many very legalistic teachers of scripture, Paul constantly reminds believers of who they are in Christ. Paul's agenda was not to make them think they truly were godless or unsaved or out of fellowship with God.

Q. But if our identity IN Christ is not in these behaviors, should we not make every effort to rid these things from our lives?

Q. Who must we first turn to for guidance?

I am not sure if you noticed it or not, but in our Romans passage as well as Galatians and Corinthians, Paul mentions sexual immorality first on his list of sin. Is not all sin the same in the eyes of our Lord? I think that depends on context. When teaching his churches Paul does NOT seem to see sexual immorality the same as other sin. This becomes very clear in his letter to the Corinthians who were struggling with this sin and probably every other sin imaginable.

To the Corinthians Paul wrote...

12 All things are lawful for me, but not all things are helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be enslaved by anything. 13 Food is meant for the stomach and the stomach for food—and God will destroy both one and the other. The body is not meant for sexual immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body. 14 And God raised the Lord and will also raise us up by his power. 15 Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a prostitute? Never! 16 Or do you not know that he who is joined to a prostitute becomes one body with her? For, as it is written, The two will become one flesh.

17 But he who is joined to the Lord becomes one spirit with him. 18 Flee from sexual immorality. Every other sin a person commits is outside the body, but the sexually immoral person sins against his own body. 19 Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, 20 for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body.

I Corinthians 6:12-20

This passage is very loaded with insight, but I think upon reading it we quickly see how the apostle Paul viewed sexual immorality.

Q. Does Paul promote that Christians are their own people or God's people?

Q. Why does this matter?

Q. How does Paul want his church to see their bodies?

Especially for young and unmarried Christians, I wanted to mention a message from Matt Mcmillen that I discovered a while back. It showed a lot of heart for him to make a bold message like he did, and I think it could really help believers who are trying to manage sexual desire in a way that is pleasing to the Lord and even see things from a different perspective. It's really good. The episode is "The Truth about Masturbation". I made a clickable link to that here in my study guide at wakinguptograce.com on this episodes page. As always, you can find the episodes page linked in the description section of this episode in your podcast app or just by visiting my podcast episodes page at wakinguptograce.com.

In our last study we read Paul saying…

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

Romans 12:1

Q. Does Paul seem to describe sexual immorality as the polar opposite of the worship we see in Romans 12?

Going back to Corinthians...

Q. What does Paul say to do in regards to sexual immorality?

Q. What does Paul mean by “you were bought with a price”?

Earlier in Paul’s letter to the Corinthians we see Paul coming down hard on sin….

Paul writes...

1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and of a kind that is not tolerated even among pagans, for a man has his father's wife. 2 And you are arrogant! Ought you not rather to mourn? Let him who has done this be removed from among you.

I Corinthians 5:1-2

I go over these passages in more detail along with other difficult passages that seem punishing to Christians in episode #17 if you want to check that out later.

Q. What was Paul’s charge against the church here?

Q. Can you imagine a group of people here pumping up this guys ego while he boasts about what he had done?

Then in verse 6 Paul writes...

Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

I Corinthians 5:6

Some translations use the word yeast. They didn’t have yeast in those times. For them leavened bread was traditional sour dough. Leaven was a bit of fermented dough that when added to dough would act similar to yeast working it’s way through the whole batch and making it rise. Leaven works fully through the dough as it settles in to it so much that you can now simply take a small piece of the dough and it has become leaven for the next batch.

Christ Yeshua also used the analogy saying “beware the leaven of the Pharisees.”

Leaven is describing influence. The Pharisees had a lot of influence, just like people at the podium have today.

In the Corinthian church pride in sin was the negative influence. Leaven would not have to be negative, but in these places the influence was negative.

Paul mentions this after saying their “boasting isn’t good”. It was their attitude that concerned Paul the most. It was going to influence others into error as well and cause people to stumble.

I wanted to mention the word repent as it certainly applies here.

We often see the word repent in our bibles. Properly defined the word repent means “change your mind” or “a change of mind”.

Q. Do you see a problem here that would require a change of mind?

Q. Do you think this even would have gone to this level if their minds were in the right place?

Q. What was it that needed to be changed in their minds?

Q. If they realized how shameful their behavior was, would Paul have had to rebuke them?

Q. Were they being guided by the Spirit or the flesh?

Q. Would this sin have a negative affect on anyone?

9 I wrote to you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— 10 not at all meaning the sexually immoral of this world, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

I Corinthians 5:9-10

Q. Does Paul judge peoples’ behavior outside of the church?

Q. What do you think Paul focused on teaching people outside of the church instead of good behavior?

Q. Is there a similar change of mind that needs to take place though in believers and unbelievers who are consumed in sin?

Q. Do you think Paul wants his church to not associate with a Christian who is struggling and needs help with sexual immorality or one who is committing these acts without shame?

Q. Is there a difference in sin under the right mindset and sin under error?

Q. Do the apostles teachings seem a bit radical in comparison with the general views of our day?

Q. Do you think that we can fully apply these principles to ourselves and in our situation today?

Paul continues...

11 But now I am writing to you not to associate with anyone who bears the name of brother if he is guilty of sexual immorality or greed, or is an idolater, reviler, drunkard, or swindler—not even to eat with such a one. 12 For what have I to do with judging outsiders? Is it not those inside the church whom you are to judge? 13 God judges those outside. Purge the evil person from among you.

I Corinthians 5:11-13

Q. Does this statement confirm that the one who committed the sexually immoral act was in fact a Christian?

Q. Paul again adds other sin here. Do you think he kicked someone out of the church every time they drank a little too much, or acted a little stingy with their money?

Q. Was it the mentality and mindset that produced the behavior most important here or the sin itself?

Q. Is true repentance "changing our view on a sin" the best way to change our behavior?

Q. Does repentance ALWAYS lead to a change in behavior?

If we read Paul's second letter to the Corinthians this man seems to have been welcomed back in once his mindset was changed. Or as Paul used the term throughout his first letter- his "spirit was saved". As I mention in episode #17 and #29, we have to be careful how we define the word spirit when we see it in scripture. It is all too easy to make this word mean salvation in our minds when that is not at all the intended meaning of the word.

5 Now if anyone has caused pain, he has caused it not to me, but in some measure—not to put it too severely—to all of you. 6 For such a one, this punishment by the majority is enough, 7 so you should rather turn to forgive and comfort him, or he may be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. 8 So I beg you to reaffirm your love for him. 9 For this is why I wrote, that I might test you and know whether you are obedient in everything. 10 Anyone whom you forgive, I also forgive. What I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, has been for your sake in the presence of Christ, 11 so that we would not be outwitted by Satan; for we are not ignorant of his designs.

II Corinthians 2:5-11

Q. What did Paul not want to happen to the man who sinned?

Q. Does this statement show that Paul did want his mind to shift toward sorrow?

Q. Would this occur in natural man apart from the Spirit?

Q. Do we see the church working as a body here to do what is right?

Q. Why do you think that Paul mentions Satan here?

Q. Would this confirm that the core issue was pride and a mindset that was rebelling against YHWH?

Q. When the change of mind occurred did Paul completely change his tone?

Throughout life we often encounter gray areas or have to make choices that are not always the choice we may desire. This is why it is so important to understand our right standing with our heavenly Father. We can ALWAYS turn to him and know that He will guide us.

Even when we ignore his guidance, Yahweh continues to guide us. He is always shaping us for the future. He is always teaching us even when we don't listen. We are His children and He is always working in our lives even when we don't see it.

The apostle Paul certainly experienced the peace and Joy that goes with following the lead of the Holy Spirit and saw that as the purpose for all Christians. We also see over and over that many did not automatically take to this understanding or choose to follow what Yahweh was guiding them to do.

We are blessed when our Lord disciplines us in love aren't we? It may not be pleasant all the time, but if we are to "run a good race" as Paul says of himself at times, we must be trained to endure….

Later in Romans Paul writes...

3 More than that, we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, 4 and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, 5 and hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.

Romans 5:3-5

Q. But are we always going to make everyone happy as Christians?

Q. Can we always be what people expect us to be in our lives?

Q. Should we allow ourselves to live based on other peoples opinions in the church?

It is easy to be taken advantage of in life when people know you are a Christian. We want to be a light to others, but let's face it, we may have people judging us based on what they would do in certain situations. We can't be everything to everyone can we? If we spread ourselves too thin we fall apart. To this point Paul writes...

Do not be guided by the pressure of people. People pleasing. Be guided by the father.

Galatians 5:21

Q. Is he saying be guided by yourself?

Q. Is he saying be guided by others opinions?

Q. Where do we go for guidance?

Q. Did Paul have authority in the church beyond what we have today?

Q. Can we look to Paul for instruction in it's proper context?

Q. Should we pretend Paul wrote directly to us?

Paul continues in Galatians...

22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. 24 And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

Galatians 5:22-24

The church in Galatia was being swayed to mix law and grace. They were being misguided by false teachers that Christ Yeshua was not enough. Fellowship and salvation required the law still. It was based on works according to this view. Christ didn't finish anything.

Q. Why would Paul say there is no law against the fruit of the Spirit?

Q. If we can walk by the flesh still as Christians, why would Paul say "And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires."

He actually teaches this earlier in his letter right before this passage. This is why context is so important. We have to be careful isolating passages….

But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh.

Galatians 5:16

When we walk by the Spirit, which is to follow the lead of the Spirit in our lives, we embrace the finished work of Christ Yeshua. We live by His grace and we please our Father in our lives. What greater peace do we get as Christians when we please our Father?

Again in Galatians we read...

And because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, Abba! Father!

Galatians 4:6

Let's end our study with instruction from Paul at the end of our Romans letter...

Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good.

Romans 12:9

Q. How can our love be made genuine?

Only by the grace of our Lord and Savior can we be set free from sin, made right with God, and choose to do what is right not from fear of punishment, but from a genuine desire that comes from the heart!

When we are born into the kingdom of our Lord our spirit is now in union with His. This union cannot be broken. It is for the purpose of Spiritual guidance. Although we don't always follow, the Spirit does not stop guiding based on behavior and Yahweh always has a plan for you.

As a child of God, your union with him cannot be broken, it cannot be made better, it cannot be changed in any way. Christ Yeshua is the rock of our salvation and fellowship, he cannot be moved! We are links in a chain that cannot be broken.