**The Decay of Morality**

*Romans 1:18-32*

**Introduction**

1. One does not have to be a historian to know there has been a significant change in the moral perspective of our society throughout the years.
   1. Some would view the change as progression toward a better tomorrow.
   2. Christians recognize it as a decay of morality.
2. As time progresses, the decay of morality in society becomes more apparent as the brazen nature of such immorality grows.
   1. Super Bowl halftime show.
   2. Presidential candidates, and other political leaders – open homosexuals, championing “women’s right to choose.”
3. How does/do society/individuals fall so far into moral decay?
4. What are Christians to do who are in the vast minority separated from this moral decay?
5. A Case Study of Moral Decay **(Romans 1:18-32)**
6. Man’s Action Toward God **(vv. 18-23)**
   1. Ultimately, the Gentiles of the text rejected God in order to fulfill their sinful desires.
   2. Ungodly and unrighteous – impiety before God, doing what is unlawful.
   3. Suppress (hold down) the truth in unrighteousness:
      1. Despite the overwhelming evidence of God, they refused to glorify Him, or be thankful.
      2. Invented idols in order to dictate how they themselves were to live.
      3. Thus, held down the truth of God’s eternal existence, thus, obligation to Him as His creation.
7. God’s Action Toward Man **(vv. 24, 26, 28)**
   1. As a reaction to, and consequence of their obstinacy, ***“God gave them up/over.”***
      1. **(v. 24)** – Gave them up to uncleanness.
      2. **(v. 26)** – Gave them up to vile passions.
      3. **(v. 28)** – Gave them over to a debased mind.
   2. An acknowledgment of free-will – God requires but does not force men to obey Him.
   3. A punitive measure of discipline – **(vv. 24, 27)** – dishonor bodies, receive in self penalty of error due.
8. The Decay of Morality **(vv. 24, 26-27, 28-32)**
   1. Result of man’s action and God’s action:
      1. Direction not coming from God. **(v. 28** – not like to retain Him in knowledge – don’t even want to think about Him)
      2. Standard is ***“the lusts of their hearts”*** (**v. 24)** – I.E. IF A MAN WANTS TO DO IT, HE CAN GO DO IT.
         1. SINCE GOD IS OUT OF THE PICTURE NONE CAN SAY ANTHING AGAINST IT.
   2. Dishonoring of bodies – **(vv. 24, 26-27)** – going against nature itself – using bodies in ways not made to be used.
   3. With such a mindset anything and everything goes **(vv. 28-31).**
   4. An encouragement of immorality by those who know the penalty **(v. 32).**
9. Morality and God are Inseparable
10. It is clear from the case study of the Gentiles in Romans 1 that when God is taken out of the picture moral decay ensues.
11. Morality is Objective
    1. Moral:
       1. “concerned with the principles of right and wrong behavior and the goodness or badness of human character” (New Oxford American Dictionary)
       2. “of or relating to principles of right and wrong in behavior” (Webster)
       3. “of, relating to, or concerned with the principles or rules of right conduct or the distinction between right and wrong; ethical” (Dictionary.com)
       4. “relating to standards of good behavior, honesty, and fair dealing, or showing high standards of this type” (Cambridge Dictionary)
    2. Words of objectivity – principles (matter in question preceded by these), right, wrong, rules, standards.
    3. ONCE SOMEONE ACCEPTS A SUBJECTIVE CONCEPT OF MORALITY ANYTHING GOES.
       1. Some would argue otherwise, but their argument is empty as long as there is not a discernable standard to rest upon.
       2. Why is homosexuality considered right, but pedophilia is wrong?
       3. IF MORALITY IS FLUID, OR SUBJECTIVE, THEN THE ONLY STANDARD IS THE CONSCIENCE OF EACH INDIVIDUAL.
    4. IF SOMEONE IS UNWILLING TO ACCEPT A VIEW WHICH ALLOWS ANYTHING TO GO, THEY MUST ADMIT TO A STANDARD AND/OR FIND A STANDARD TO SOLIDIFY THEIR UNREST CONCERNING MATTERS THEY AREN’T WILLING TO LABEL “MORAL.”
       1. If you are unwilling to say pedophilia is right, or murder for that matter, then you must be able to explain why. (a vague, “everyone knows why” argument will not do)
    5. IF SUCH A STANDARD IS SOUGHT AND FOUND, ONE MUST BE ABLE TO DETERMINE WHO MADE IT, AND WHY THEIR RULES OF MORALITY ARE TRUE.
12. The Origin of Morality is God
    1. If not just anything goes, and a standard is sought and found which justifies the exclusive nature of moral thought (i.e. some things are going too far to be deemed moral), THEN WHAT MAKES THE ORIGINATOR OF SUCH A STANDARD LEGITIMATE.
       1. If something is moral or immoral because of what so-and-so said in the distant past, or what a society established in the distant past, who is to say those who preceded them were wrong?
       2. Such is the same problem man runs into when considering the origin of the universe. (Try to trace everything back to a cause, but what caused the cause?)
    2. The only logical conclusion for all things, morality included, is that there must be an uncaused cause.
    3. God must be the standard of morality because He stands alone as the eternal creator – if all things issued forth from Him, then so does morality:
       1. This is why the Gentiles reverted to idolatry – **Romans 1:21-23**
          1. Acknowledging God requires conformity to His standard.
          2. Creating a god makes you the arbiter of morality.
          3. In other words, they knew they needed to adhere to a standard for the ease of their conscience, so they created a standard to justify their desires.
       2. Only God is good – **Matthew 19:16-17**
       3. God is the one judge – **James 4:12**
       4. The standard of judgment is seated in His nature – **1 John 1:5-6**
13. When God is Rejected Morality Decays
    1. When God was rejected in the antediluvian world – **Genesis 6:1-3, 5-7**
       1. Sons of God – those walking with God.
       2. Daughters of Men – those not obedient to God.
       3. Seen in contrast of descendants of Cain, and new son given to Adam and Eve (Seth) – **Genesis 4:23-26**
       4. Stopped walking with God as they intermarried with the disobedient, and their thoughts were entirely corrupted.
    2. Enemies of the Cross – **Philippians 3:17-19**
       1. Enemies – i.e. contrary to Christ and God – not walking ***“by the same rule” (v. 16)***.
       2. They are the arbiters of their morality – ***(v. 19) – “whose god is their belly”***
       3. They glory in shameful things – **(v. 19)**
    3. Gentiles – **Romans 1:28-29** – ***“filled with all unrighteousness”***
14. The Christian Among Moral Decay
15. Must Continue Transformation
    1. The world rushes on toward immorality and away from God, but we must not be conformed – **Romans 12:1-2**
       1. Our mind must be renewed by God’s word, thus, transformed.
       2. Transformation – **2 Corinthians 3:18; 4:2-3, 6 (**in contrast to Moses in the OT) – apostolic ministry, but us as partakers of it in the gospel.
          1. **2 Corinthians 4:16** – being renewed day by day.
    2. We’re to fill our minds with God’s word, not with the world’s wisdom – **Colossians 2:6-10; 3:16**
       1. Acknowledge the danger of secular wisdom, especially in an educational environment.
       2. See the value in the true wisdom of God’s word.
16. Must Not Be Deceived
    1. Like the Corinthians – **1 Corinthians 15:33** (Not just influence of behavior, but teaching); **2 Corinthians 11:3**
    2. Regardless of the arguments given, we must always believe God – **Romans 3:4**
    3. God does not change, nor do morals! – **Hebrews 13:8-9** (directly following is exhortation to not be swayed by doctrines differing from Christ. HE HASN’T CHANGED.)
17. Must Be Circumspect
    1. Walking circumspectly and understanding the will of the Lord – **Ephesians 5:15-17**
       1. Circumspectly – *akribōs* – pert. to strict conformity to a standard or norm, w. focus on careful attention, accurately, carefully, well. (BDAG)
       2. English – from Latin *circumspectus*, from *circumspicere* ‘look around’, from *circum* ‘around, about’ + *specere* ‘look’.
       3. We must always be aware, looking all around, and making judgments based on God’s will.
    2. We cannot be comfortable with any matter simply based on its broad acceptance in the world.
    3. Our head must be on a swivel, always taking the full look at things in comparison to God’s will.
18. Must Not Grow Discouraged
    1. The right living Christian will be attacked and ostracized – **1 Peter 4:3-6** – the end is better for us than for them. (Live according to God in the Spirit – i.e. after our fleshly life is over)
    2. Do not grow weary – **Galatians 6:7-9** – it matters not what others say, or what happens to us, we will reap what we sow, and this should eliminate discouragement.
    3. We’re SUPPOSED to be a peculiar people – **Titus 2:11-14** – we should take pride in being God’s children.

**Conclusion**

1. We live in a world that is already morally bankrupt.
2. The further society ventures away from God the more we will see a decay in morality.
3. Christians cannot afford to move. They must stand firmly in the Lord’s way.