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Revelation

Chapter 14 - Revealing the Consequence of Choice Beckons Other to Persevere (vs. 9-12)

Revelation 14:9-12: Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name.” Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.

Revelation 14 really is about the consequence of choices. And it starts off with the saints that are standing with the Lamb of God, unapologetically unafraid of the ramifications and the consequences that may come because of their stand. We know that the world lies under the power of the evil one, and we know that the beast is now in control. And if in fact you will not worship the image of the beast nor take his number, you will die. It's the world forcing. Scripture is telling us that the world is taking us on this journey, and it's taking us to that ultimate place of saying, "You must decide to be with us and not with God." Put that in contrast with Christ who comes on the earth, and He says, "Come unto Me all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." We don't really sense that He walks around putting a gun to people's heads. He just says, "Choose." And He lays before you life and you have the opposite death, and He says, "Choose life." Nevertheless, the world will not allow you that luxury to choose. They will tell you, "If you don't choose us, you will die."

We come to Chapter 14 and the 144,000 are not moving. They are at peace and joyfully singing with the Lamb of God. Revelation is telling us that evil has a face. In fact, if you look with me in Revelation 13.

If you want to know what the face of evil looks like, verse 1 reads this way,

(Revelation 13:1) “And the dragon stood on the sand of the seashore. Then I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems, and on his heads were blasphemous names.

(Revelation 13:2) And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.”

Evil has a face.

And as you look in Revelation, he also displays that love has a face. It is the Lamb of God as if slain. And so, you have a choice of who you're going to be with. The lines have been drawn.

If you back up to Revelation 11, if you look in particular with me in verse 1, it says this,

(Revelation 11:1) “Then there was given me a measuring rod like a staff; and someone said, “Get up and measure the temple of God and the altar, and those who worship in it.”

Now, he's measuring and God's drawing a line, “Are you with Me?”

Now, as you look at the passage,

(Revelation 11:2) ““Leave out the court which is outside the temple and do not measure it, for it has been given to the nations; and they will tread under foot the holy city for forty-two months.”

But what's interesting is it's drawing a line so clear that you're either in the holy place or you're not. It's not like, “Well, maybe I can just hang around in the courts of the temple.” He goes, “No, you can't do that.” You're either in the holy place, you're either fully committed and holy unto God, or you're not. You say, “Well, why is He saying that?” Because the world's not going to let you sit on a

fence. In fact, the point is that the day is going to come when they're going to say, "If you're not with us, we will kill you."

So, as He's been revealing to us in this passage, what we see are the consequences of the choices that people make. And as we've been coming down, in particular in verse 6, we hear the angel in midheaven proclaiming, "Time midheaven," meaning "the time for decision." "You're between heaven and earth. Make your decision."

So, in verse 6 it reads,

(Revelation 14:6) "And I saw another angel flying in midheaven, having an eternal gospel..."

He's beckoning. This is God calling, "Follow Me. Come." "Eternal gospel" is the good news of God, and it is the message of God which He beckons, and He desires for all to come to Him.

Then it says,

(Revelation 14:7) "... "Fear God, and give Him glory...""

“For He’s making the decision clear.” In other words, “You're either going to choose the world or you're going to choose Me, but things are being brought to a head.”

By the time you come to verse 8, you realize that part of our gospel is not only declaring, “God loves you,” and the good news, but the other part of the gospel is, “You don't want to go that way.” Because He gives the description of Babylon falling. The very thing that you're embracing, the things of the world, are falling. They're crumbling. And so, part of our gospel is, “Don't trust in something that's going to crumble and disappoint you, and bring you to a point of great depression and oppression.”

Then he comes into, if you look in verse 9 through 12, this is the perseverance of the saints.

And this is the conclusion that he gives us in verse 12, (Revelation 14:12) “Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.”

Now, the verses that are revealed to us in verses 9 through 11, are those verses that once again reveal the

consequences of the decision that you make if in fact you choose not to follow Christ. So, as He begins to reveal this, we go, "Okay, that's horrific, that's terrible." And unfortunately, I think we somehow shy away from telling people just how horrible it is to choose the world.

Because the world has so tainted the message to make it look like the gospel is such a horrible thing and to make it look like they're the great savior. And before long, well, you drank the Kool-Aid that they're offering. Or in this particular passage, we'll talk about the wine of Babylon.

In fact, once again, if you read it with me in verse 8,

(Revelation 14:8) "And another angel, a second one, followed, saying, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great, she who has made all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.""

In other words, at first, it seems like, well, it's pretty enjoyable, it even has a good taste, but it really ultimately is poison.

There's an interesting passage; we won't turn there, in Proverbs 23 as well as in Isaiah 28 that makes reference to what it is to be inebriated and drunk and really

involved in wine and wine taking control of your life. What's interesting in the conclusion of Proverbs 23 is that though the drunk gets beat up, has a terrible headache, whips him up, by the time he finishes and finally regains his sanity again, he goes, "I'm just going to go have another drink." And you go, "Okay, none of that makes any sense because you've just been beat up by this stuff and now, you're going back to it again." And in certain respects, this is what this passage is going to be talking about; the inability of man to shake off that which he drinks in. And we're going to be talking about that as we go in.

As we come to this passage, you need to also put within the context that He's speaking to the church, and in speaking to the church, He's telling the churches, "You're going to have to make a decision." Because as we looked at the seven churches of Asia Minor, they're allowing the things of the world to come in, and by virtue of this, they're actually becoming intoxicated with the things of the world. And He says, "You've got to get that out."

Because once again, the lines are so clear that there is no middle of the road.

So, as you come to the passage, let me mention the seven churches of Asia Minor. If you were to look at the church at Asia Minor, in particular the church of Sardis, what John is saying, what Scripture is saying, what the Spirit of God is saying is that the church will never make it if it doesn't lose its facade, if it doesn't stop faking it. And so, the Church of Sardis is really all about appearance. And you have a name for yourself, but it's just a name. There's nothing real there. And I think it's one of the things that concerns me the most is that the church is so involved in getting their name out there and making themselves look important rather than just being right with God. And so, He's telling the church at Sardis, "You've got to get rid of the fake, you've got to get rid of the facade," and as he talks to the church of Laodicea, "You need to repel the world. You've got to get real with this thing." You look at Laodicea, and of course Laodicea is embracing all the wonderful things of the world, the money and everything, and He goes, "You've got to push that away." And I have

found in a church, you have to keep pushing money off of the church. It has a way of coming back, and it says, "We can do this and we can do this," and you got to keep pushing it back and you've got to go, "But we're not making decisions based on money." You have to keep doing that. Because if you don't, before long, the world enters into your door and you become an institution or an organization that is money focused. We also know that there has to be that genuineness of heart like the church at Ephesus that tells us that we're going to have to get real about our faith, and more specifically, real about our love. If in fact we're not real about our love, then once again we've allowed the world to come in because they're all about talking about love. They're not about doing it though. And it seems as if people are more interested in using other people than they are about helping other people. We understand that the greatest way that people can be helped and truly loved is to point them to Christ. We also understand that there's no such thing as a middle road. And when He talks to the church of Smyrna, he says, "You're getting ready to die." Now, if you think about it, somebody says, "Within a few days you're all going to die

if you keep on the track.” You have to ask yourself, “Am I going to stay in that congregation? Or am I going to move and maybe I'll change my membership over to Laodicea? They have money over there.” But He tells the church of Smyrna, He goes, “Stay steadfast. You're all going to die, but I'm going to give you a crown for doing it. Remain true.” But it is that point in which you realize there is actually no middle of the road. There isn't any mid-spot to choose from. There is no holding hands with the world. As the church of Philadelphia might be concerned with what other people are thinking, He goes, “You can't be concerned about belonging to the club. You have to really break from this kind of thinking.” And then He talks specifically to the church of Pergamum and says that you just can't compromise either. Of course, they were all about compromise, and they were all about false teachers and those who are peddling the word for money, once again. The church at Thyatira was about tolerating evil. And He says, “You can't let Jezebel end the church. You can't let immorality be a part of it. You have to be separate.”

In fact, if you look with me in 2 Corinthians 6, a familiar passage to I'm sure all of you, but you hear the call in the passage. It just takes out the middle of the road, the holding hands, the compromising, the tolerance. And it just says, "You've got to stop being fake. You've got to start getting real with your faith."

So, if you look at the passage in 2 Corinthians 6, it reads this way,

(2 Corinthians 6:14) "Do not be bound together with unbelievers..."

That's pretty clear, isn't it?

"... for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?"

He doesn't say, "gray," or "shadow" or anything like that. Are you seeing that?

(2 Corinthians 6:15) "Or what harmony has Christ with Belial..."

Of course, Christ is the one who brings life; Belial is the one that brings waste and destruction.

"... or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever?"

(2 Corinthians 6:16) Or what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For we are the temple of the living God; just as God said,

“I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR GOD, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE.

(2 Corinthians 6:17) Therefore...”

What is He saying in verse 17? “Get out of there.”

“... COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,”
says the Lord.

“AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; And I will
welcome you.

(2 Corinthians 6:18) And I will be a father to you, And you shall be sons and daughters to Me,”
Says the Lord Almighty.”

A decision is made. And you say, “Well, I'm not going to make one right now.” Oh, you'll make one. The world may put the gun to your head and make you make it, but you're going to make one. And there's going to be a decision that will come out of your mouth. The lines clearly have been drawn and ultimately as we

comprehend what is going on in this particular passage, we begin to find out what the real issue is and how the lines are drawn. And if I've never clarified it up to this point, let me just really, really clarify it. Here's the line: Worship is the issue. So, whatever you worship is what side you're on. Now, just to clarify what worship is, because I think a lot of times we put it in the context of Sunday school and church and stuff like that. So, let me just emphasize what it means. It's anything you ascribe worth to. It's anything that you say is worthy of my attention, worthy of my time, worthy of my effort, worthy of my money. I hear people, "Eh, you know, I make it to church sometimes." I go, "Okay, well, I know you're not worshipping God. You're worshipping maybe something else. Other things are more important to you. Because where your time is, where your treasure is, there will your heart be and also." And when Scripture talks about worship, it's a very interesting term in the Greek, which makes reference to kissing the hand, actually the literal sense of it. And oftentimes viewed as somebody bowing their face to the ground and doing homage to somebody. But the whole personification of it is that you are so

enamored and so longing to please this force. And for some people it's their job, for some people it's their career, for some people it's their education, for some people it's their family. There are things that you jump through the hoops to somehow please. And in this particular text, it's saying, "Be careful what you worship, because what you worship will decide where you stand. And where you stand will decide the consequence of your eternal soul."

So, as we come to the passage, we're going to pick up in the text, and as we look at the beginning of verse 9, (Revelation 14:9) "Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships..."

It's about worship. That's what it's about. The lines have been drawn, and it defines what you fear, it defines what you love, it defines what you long for, it defines what you're committed to, it defines what you work for, it defines who you'll become. Because Psalm 115:8 says, "Whatever you worship, you'll be like that." So, it will

literally define who you will become, not just simply what you do.

The passage reads,

“Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, “If anyone worships the beast and his image...”

That is to say, there's a clear recognition of what he represents. When it's talking about worshiping the beast and his image, the image is that which the beast represents. The point is that people are going to be making decisions, and it's not going to be because they have no inkling or no understanding of what they're deciding. What he's talking about within the passage is that they're very clear. They're willingly, wittingly making a decision with all the cognizant matter moving in the right direction, and they know exactly what they're deciding. Now, I know people say, “Eh, they don't know what they're in for. They don't know what...” These people know exactly what they're deciding. They know exactly what they're loving.

So, the passage reads, they not only worship the beast in his image, but watch the next phrase because it's a very important phrase,

“... and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand.”

Now, you can get fixated on the mark, you can get fixated on where the mark is, or you can get fixated and clearly understand what he's focusing on, and that is receiving. What the Scripture is telling us is that worship begins with you receiving. I know you don't usually think about that. Remember Abraham and that he rescues Lot and rescues Sodom from the other nations? And of course, the king of Sodom goes, “I want to do you a favor, so let me give you something.” And Abraham says, “I'm not taking anything from you.” Why does Abraham not take anything from him? Well, there's a number of reasons why he doesn't do it, but let me tell you the main reason. The main reason he doesn't take anything from the king of Sodom is because he knows that once he takes something from him, there's an allegiance. There's somehow a moving together of unifying 2 peoples. Because this is why Scripture says, “You go into a rich man's house and he

offers you food, put a knife to your throat.” Because once you start taking from them, he's coming back at you. It's one of the problems that people used to have with the mafia. “Let me give you something.” “Okay.” So, then they give you something, then what happens? They own you. So, what Scripture is saying is, “Be careful what you receive.” This is why John will say, “But as many as received Him, to them He gave the power, the right to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” The question is, who are you receiving from and what are you receiving? If you're receiving the things of the world and if you're making deals with the things of the world, then you're actually making commitments. You're actually coming into a kind of relationship that is being built upon. First of all, you're receiving from them. So, the passage starts off with, be careful what you receive and who you receive it from because it creates this union and it will create a sense of obligation. And once you receive it, you're now, what? You're now spoken for. You now have begun to be a part of this people.

It then turns and it talks about, how does this deal end? What solidifies the deal? In the passage, it makes reference to drinking, which is very interesting, as he's already made statement of in verse 8, that drinking solidifies the deal. So, you start off by receiving, and then the second thing that you do is drink in.

The passage reads this way, if you look with me, in verse 10,

(Revelation 14:10) “He also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.”

Now, the reason why it puts the “presence of the holy angels” and “the presence of the Lamb” in the text is that before them these people are making decisions to reject, one, before the angels, the laws of God, two, before the Lamb, the grace of God. They're making a conscious decision. This is why it's saying, “before the face of,” actually the Greek is “in front of the face of.” So, you're

going to have the angels, and you're going to have the Lamb, and they're going to decide not to receive Him.

If you back up into verse 8,

(Revelation 14:8) “... all the nations drink of the wine of the passion of her immorality.”

Because of this, the wine that they have will turn into a wrath. It's sort of that picture of when you start off drinking and everything seems okay, and then, after a while, you have a really bad headache and all kinds of things. You start seeing things; you become delusional. Well, that's the wrath of wine. You begin with the pleasure of the wine, but it always ends in the wrath of wine.

So, the passage begins to describe this mixing. And what's interesting is that it says,

“... the wrath of God, which is mixed in full strength...”

Which is basically saying there's nothing to water it down, to put it in modern vernacular, 100 proof. We're looking at 100 proof and it is so potent that there is no changing. And that's the point of the text; that what this does is it

creates an incoherent, delusional, unable to care about anyone or anything. Isn't that what alcohol does for you? I mean, it so inebriates you that there's no way that you don't even know what up is, and you can't see. So, it dooms you forever because you're not able to grasp anything. Here again, have you ever tried to talk with a drunk person? Have you ever tried to reason with them? Have you ever tried to share some deep, wonderful, marvelous thoughts of love with them? They just can't seem to get there. And the passage is making reference to how this so gets into your system.

Now, it is important that you understand verse 10,

(Revelation 14:10) “he also will drink...”

Because if you look in verse 8,

(Revelation 14:8) “... the nations drink of the wine of the passion...”

You look back in verse 10,

“he also will drink of the wine of the wrath of God...”

Which once again is basically the same cup. But what he's talking about is that which you do to become a part of

something. And this is a very interesting description because Scripture uses this metaphor in so many different ways. Of course, I mean, many of us at least know of the incident where people drank Kool-Aid and they actually had poison in it and they died. So, the saying, "You drank the Kool-Aid," is not only a picture of you drank the Kool-Aid, but it's a picture of you fell for what they were selling you. You believed in what they were telling you. You put your trust in this. So, when he talks about drinking, it is something that you're ingesting and you're saying, this is very important, "I want this to be a part of my life." This is why when we come to the communion, and Christ says, "Now, I want you to drink this." Why do you think He wants us to drink it? Because it's that picture of Christ saying, "You want Me to be a part of your life?" And we're saying, "Yeah, I want You to be a part of my life." And as we see the physical part of it in which it goes into and we ingest and our body begins to be moved and influenced by it, this particular word in the figurative always is used to display a saturation of the mind. So, what it's talking about is that you have chosen to saturate your mind with the things of the world. It has now taken control of your

thoughts, and it becomes the desire of every decision that you make is based on the things of the world. In fact, you can't think in terms of, "Well, how would this benefit the kingdom of God? How could we see a soul saved? How could God's people be united through this?" You can't think in those terms. You're not able to. You become so drunk with the wine of the world. One of the pictures of hell, of course, is a place burning of passions. One of the reasons why it's made reference to the fact of the great burning is it is that picture of people with their lust and their passions that never seem to be able to be quenched, because a person who is selfish is never satisfied. They're never happy. You can put them in a wonderful place. You can put them in a place where you have church members, you gather them together. You say, "Well, isn't this a wonderful place?" They go, "No, I've got to get out of here." Because they don't want to be here. Where they want to be is a place in which they can abuse and use and exploit and take advantage of and they want to feed their lust and their desires and they're only thinking about those things. They can't think about anything else because what they've been drinking has saturated their

mind and their refreshment, their moving, their power; everything that sustains them comes from this in which they made a part of their life.

If you look in the passage, it goes on and says,

(Revelation 14:11) “And the smoke of their torment...”

It's an interesting phrase because really what it's revealing is their torment is coming from their own desires. “Oh, I don't think there is a hell.” People say, “God wouldn't send people to hell.” Wait a minute, wait a minute. That's not what I'm reading. What I'm reading is man embraces hell. He made a clear, viable choice in the presence of the angels, in the presence of the Lamb, and he says, “I choose fire. I choose the fire of my passions. I choose the desires of my life.”

“And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night...”

Well, I mean, go back to Isaiah, “The wicked are like the tossing sea which cannot be quiet. There is no peace for the wicked.” Now, whose fault is that? Well, it's not God. God's not shaking their life up. What's shaking their life

up? The decisions that they make, the things that they long for, the things that they love.

“... they have no rest day and night...”

Watch the phrase in verse 11. It's making sure that you understand.

“... those who worship the beast...”

These are not victims. These are not people that have somehow been beguiled. These are people who have made a conscious decision to worship the face of evil. They've actually decided, “This is what I'm going to worship.” And they've embraced this. And they have not only worshiped the beast, but everything that he stands for. And they have willingly received the mark of his name. What is his name? Destroyer. That's who he is. He destroys. Why are people going there? Now, that's a question I cannot answer. I cannot comprehend it. But the angel isn't necessarily proclaiming these things so that you get immersed in the consequence of a wrong choice. He's saying these things so that you might embrace the right choice. And so, he ends with this very simple, clear verse. Read it with me.

(Revelation 14:12) “Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God...”

Now, look at the phrase here, “keep”. That's somebody that embraces; that's somebody that says, “I love this.” It's something that you're holding on to. In fact, it is actually a military term of a guard watching a prison of sorts. He's making sure that no infringement is happening. Why? Because he cares very much. This is something very valuable to him. To him, it means life or death.

“... who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.”

That is to say, that's what causes you to want to do the right thing. You don't naturally want to keep the commandments of God, but you've put your trust in Christ. And in putting your trust in Christ, it becomes the very mark that saves you. That's why he starts off, and he says, “Here's the perseverance of the saints. Here's what'll keep you going.” What is that? Okay, let me put it in another way. The mark of fidelity is the mark of God. There is a mark of the beast, right? Okay, what's the mark of God? Fidelity. Faithfulness.

Hebrews will put it this way, Hebrews 3:6, “If we hold fast, firm until the end.”

Or Hebrews 3:14, “If we hold fast, firm, wholly assured, firm until the end.”

What's the mark of a faithful husband? He stays married. It's no mystery, is it? I mean, a guy could say, “Well, I was faithful for 10 years. On the 11th year, okay, maybe I wasn't, but that doesn't make me unfaithful.” Yeah, it makes you unfaithful. And what Scripture is saying is that perseverance comes about because of a fidelity. The only thing that keeps you maintaining is because when you really love somebody, well, you're not going to leave them. It doesn't matter what happens; you can't leave them. And it is this faith that maintains that relationship and keeps you steadfast all the way to the end. You'll ultimately say, “I'll die for you. I'll die with you. We will go together.” And Scripture is saying, “That's the perseverance, the fidelity of the saints.”

You have this wonderful passage, if you look with me in Revelation 19. And as we come to Revelation 19, of course we have that picture of Christ coming in all of His

glory. And I love the picture. Of course, the saints are crying out, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns!” (verse 6) We could probably sing the song, but I wouldn't do it too well today.

And if you go on down, it says in verse 11,

(Revelation 19:11) “And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True...”

What name are you going to have on you? How do you know? What's the mark of Christ on you? Faithful and True. Here's the perseverance of the saints- They remain faithful and true to the things that God says, to the relationship that they have. They're not leaving. They're not moving. And this is the picture of the church. He's preaching to the churches of Asia Minor, “You've allowed the world to come in. You're living this fake life. You're not getting real. You're not going to hold up. You're not going to make it. You're holding hands here. You're going halfway. You're in the middle of the road. There's compromise. There's tolerance. You're never going to make it because the decisions are going to be so clear

that it's going to be either you with them or you with Me.” And Christ says, “Look, if you're not with Me, you're against Me.” We'll find that out. It's going to be revealed. What's bizarre as we go through Revelation is we're going to see that though hailstones of fire are falling from the sky, people are still shaking their fists to God and cursing Him. I'm going, “Take a clue. This might be a good day to fall on your knees.” And they're literally going to watch the falling of the cities. They're going to watch it happen. They're going to see it happen. And God's going to go, “Are you sure you want to trust in that?” And they go, “Oh, yeah, we love it.” They're just watching it crumble. Now, what Scripture is telling us is these have drunk the wine to a point of no return. And the wrath of God is upon them because of this. In other words, the consequences of them ingesting the things of the world are going to be set loose.

If I could just show you a couple of passages that make reference to this. One is found in Romans 1.

It says this,

(Romans 1:18) “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness.”

Because there's something that they want to do.

“Following God is not that important.” “Why do you say that?” “Because I'd rather do something else.” “Okay, then just say you want to do something else.” But the point is that you continue to suppress what you know to be true.

It goes on and says,

(Romans 1:19) “Because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them.”

It's not that you don't know what's right.

(Romans 1:20) “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.”

(Romans 1:21) For even though they knew God...”

In other words, one of the great themes of this text, even when it goes into Chapter 2, is that you're without excuse.

It's not that you don't know. You know, you've just decided to go the other way.

(Romans 1:20) “For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.

(Romans 1:21) For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

(Romans 1:22) Professing to be wise, they became fools,

(Romans 1:23) and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures.”

Watch verse 24, because it's very important that you understand this. See, the world drinks the wine that allures them into the things of the world. They know what it is, but they're willing to suffer the consequences of it. And the wrath of God is allowing man to suffer the

consequences of his choice. I don't know if you understand that or not. "I desire the passions of the fire in me. I desire to live there forever, to go after everything I want, to be selfish, to live selfishly, and to be self-consumed. That's where I want to live." Really?

(Romans 1:24) "Therefore God gave them over..."

The worst thing that can happen. You want to see hell on earth? Go do what you want to do.

"... God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

(Romans 1:25) For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.

(Romans 1:26) For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

(Romans 1:27) and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and

burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing...”

Oh, just to let you know, Scripture does call that an indecent act.

“... committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”

What's the penalty that is coming to them? Look at the text, “receiving in their own persons the due penalty”. You take a hammer, you hit yourself in the thumb, it's going to hurt. You can say, “It's God's fault that I'm in pain.” But God would say, “Don't hit yourself with a hammer.” It's probably one of His 10 commandments, “Thou shalt not hit yourself with a hammer.” Because everything that God is telling us not to do or to do is for our good. And He says, “Do what I tell you, and you'll live. You'll have this wonderful life.” And here's the perseverance of the saint, because he knows that God's commandments are things that are not burdensome. He goes on and he says in this passage,

(Romans 1:28) “And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind...”

Okay, so the first thing you see is their body suffers because of the decisions that they make. I mean, you get a person drinking all the time, what's going to happen? Okay, maybe liver problems? I don't know. You get a person that's immoral and they continue to sleep around with all kinds of different people, what's going to happen? I don't know, there's a lot of diseases.

“And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind...”

So, you think about the wrong things, you're going to go crazy. “Oh, I want to hold on to my anger.” I wouldn't do that if I were you, because it's going to make you go crazy. “I want to hold on to my fears.” I wouldn't do that if I were you. See? Casting all your cares upon Him, for He cares for you, and He can take all that anxiety away. But you willfully and willingly holding onto these things, there's a point where God goes, “Okay,” and He gives you over, and the destruction comes when He lets go.

“... God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

(Romans 1:29) being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed...”

By the way, verse 29, do you want to kind of get a picture of hell? Here we go. Unrighteousness, wickedness, greed; all these things that people love so much.

“... evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips.”

That's going to be a wonderful place.

(Romans 1:30) “slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

(Romans 1:31) without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful.”

“Oh, they just didn't know.”

Read verse 32,

(Romans 1:32) “and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of

death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

Look with me in 2 Thessalonians 2.

(2 Thessalonians 2:7) “For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work...”

You know, there are certain people that love lawlessness, right? I don't know. I can't figure it. But I'm just thankful that I don't think like them.

But it says,

“For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way.

(2 Thessalonians 2:8) Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

(2 Thessalonians 2:9) that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders,

(2 Thessalonians 2:10) and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish..."

So, why is it that they drank the Kool-Aid of deception?

Here's the phrase,

"... because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved."

The Scripture is telling us they had a clear choice. For this reason, God gave them over to what? Verse 11. What did God give them over to? Delusional thinking. "No, I want to get drunk." Okay, here's 100 proof. Take it. The worst thing that could ever happen is God give us what we want and there's a point where man just so rebels and so spits on the cross. It's no wonder that Scripture says, "How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?" Here He is offering this to us, and we say, "I don't want it." He not only revealed to us in the Old Testament that His ways were true and right, but then He sends His Son, and He says, "And all of these were because I loved you." And man still says, "I don't want to have anything to do with it." You say, "Well, why can't God just make us go into heaven?" Then you wouldn't want to be there, and you

would just cause havoc in heaven. So, God gives men what they want, and it's probably one of the saddest things, but the passage says, here's our perseverance: We stay faithful and true to Him.

Closing Prayer:

Father, thank You for Your word. Thank You for the encouragement of it. We realize that perseverance can only come as I remain true to You. My fidelity to You is what sustains me. Because I love You. I couldn't leave You. Because of what You've done for me. I couldn't hope in anybody else. You're the One. There's no One else that is true. No One else.

Your head's bowed and your eyes closed. You have to make a decision. Sometimes people ride that fence, they just kind of work both sides. They think that's okay and it's going to work out. It's not going to work. The day is going to show it. And whether it's the last breath you take on your deathbed, or you're able to see these final days begin to unfold, not being a believer. You're going to understand that you're going to have to make a decision one way or the other.

