

## Keener Romans Session04 Partial

All right, let's jump into the book of Romans. We're going deep with Dr. Craig Keener today. Oh, he's a fantastic scholar.

Yeah, he really is. And in this lecture, he's looking at Romans 1.18-32. Okay, yeah. And it's about this connection between idolatry, immorality, and God's response to folks who reject him.

Yeah. And Keener dives right into some pretty intense concepts. Right.

Like wrath from heaven. Right, yeah. Which can sound a little scary.

It's a term that can make people kind of sit up and pay attention. But Keener's point here is actually really interesting. So what is he saying about it? He's saying it's not just some kind of arbitrary punishment.

He sees God's judgment as another side of his righteousness, right alongside his offer of salvation. Okay, so it's like two sides of the same coin, right? Yeah, exactly. So how does that actually work? Is it like some kind of cosmic punishment? Well, he uses this analogy, right? Imagine a society where everybody just does whatever they want, no rules, no sense of right and wrong.

Yeah, chaos. Total chaos, right? Yeah. Eventually, things would just fall apart.

Yeah, of course. And that's kind of how Keener views God's judgment. It's this natural consequence, right? When we reject truth and we live in a way that just goes against how God designed us.

Okay. And that rejection, according to Keener, often starts with idolatry. So when we talk about idolatry, we're not just talking about like bowing down to golden statues.

No, it's a lot broader than that. It's anything we put before God, you know, money, power, even certain ideologies. Oh, yeah, yeah.

It's like we're choosing to ignore, you know, deep down what we know is true about God, his plan for us. It's like we're choosing to ignore our conscience in a way. Exactly.

Yeah. And instead, we're chasing after things that just can't truly satisfy. Yeah.

And Keener, he argues that even if we don't have like all the information about God, we're still accountable. Yeah. He talks about this idea of general revelation.

Right, right. Meaning that God's power and divinity, it's kind of built into creation itself. It's evident in the world around us.

Exactly. You can see it. And you know what's really interesting? He uses ancient philosophers to illustrate this.

Oh, yeah. Like who? Guys like Plato and Aristotle. Okay.

Even without the Bible, they recognized that there was this design in nature that pointed to something bigger than just random chance. He even quotes Epictetus. Oh, yeah.

Right. Who basically said, you know, the idea that the universe just kind of happened by accident is absurd. Yeah.

It's ridiculous. And Keener's point is, if those guys with the limited knowledge they had could see evidence of a creator, how much more accountable are we today? Right. We have even more information available.

Exactly. So it really underscores this connection, this link between what we know and our responsibility. Yeah.

That makes sense. But couldn't someone say that those philosophers were just observing natural laws and didn't actually believe in a personal God? Yeah. That's a fair point.

Right. But what's really cool is that many of them actually did, you know, they saw a mind, a divine mind behind those laws. They saw the order and the complexity of the universe.

Yeah. And that, you know, pointed to a creator. And Keener uses that to say, you know, this idea of a creator, it's not just, you know, some religious concept.

It resonates with human reason, with our observation. Okay. So then how does all of this connect to us, to humans being made in God's image? Well, Keener argues that when we, you know, engage in idolatry, we're actually corrupting that image.

Like we're tarnishing a masterpiece or something. Yeah. It's like we're trading, you know, a priceless masterpiece for, for cheap knockoff.

Yeah. We're exchanging the glory of God, you know, our creator for, for stuff that's just, it's lesser and ultimately it can't fulfill it. It leaves you empty.

Yeah. And this corruption, he says, you know, it doesn't just affect our beliefs. It affects our actions too.

Okay. So let's unpack that. How does Keener connect idolatry to immorality? What's the, what's the link? He really zooms in on sexual sin.

Okay. He says it distorts God's original design, you know, for humanity and, and he goes back to Genesis. Right.

The beginning. The very beginning. Yeah.

Emphasizing the complementarity of male and female, both created in God's image. Right. And, and it's within that context of creation and God's design that the Keener addresses the issue of, of same sex relationships.

Gotcha. And, and just to be clear, you know, we're here to present Keener's perspective. We're not taking sides.

Exactly. We're just trying to lay out his argument. Right.

So what does he actually say about, about same sex relationships? Well, his position is that, that same sex intercourse is quote, against nature, unquote. He, he believes that God's design for sexuality is rooted in that, that procreative union between a man and a woman. Okay.

And that this, this complementarity is like this, this foundation, you know, for how, how God made us, how we're supposed to live. Okay. And he connects this to the idea of, of being handed over to sin, which, you know, appears a lot in this passage in Romans.

What exactly does he mean by that? It's kind of a, it's kind of a weird phrase. Yeah. It's, it's a bit of a head scratcher at first, but, but it's not about God forcing people into sin.

It's more like he allows us to experience, you know, the natural consequences of our choices. Think of it this way. If you, you ignore a warning sign on a hiking trail and you end up lost, well, you're experiencing the consequences of ignoring that sign.

Right. You made a choice. Exactly.

So, so it's kind of like we're choosing to walk down a path and, and God in his justice, he lets us see where that path leads. Okay. So it's like we're choosing to ignore the map and he's saying, okay, well see where that gets you.

Right. And it's a form of judgment. Yeah.

But it's also, it's like a wake up call. It's like a warning. Yeah.

To recognize, you know, how destructive our choices can be. Right. So we can change course.

Exactly. But, but doesn't that make God seem, I don't know, harsh? Yeah. I think that's a natural question.

Yeah. But Kenery emphasizes that, that God isn't being malicious here. Yeah.

He's trying to protect us from further harm. It's tough love. You know, like, like a parent letting their kid, you know, touch a high stove.

Oh yeah. You know, not to punish them, but to teach them a lesson. Don't do that again.

Exactly. That's hot. And so, so it's about, it's about helping us to, you know, grasp how, how serious our choices really are.

Right. The weight of them. Okay.

Yeah. And how, how dangerous it is to keep, to keep rejecting God's truth. It's like a downward spiral.

Yeah. Like digging yourself deeper and deeper into a hole further away from the light. Yeah.

This is, this is some pretty intense stuff. It really makes you think about the choices we make and, and what could happen, you know, if we keep going down that wrong path. But Keener, he doesn't leave us there, does he? No, he doesn't.

He reminds us that God's righteousness is revealed, not just in, you know, judgment, but also in his offer of, of salvation through Jesus. Right. That's where things start to get really hopeful.

And that's what we're going to talk about in the next part of our deep dive. So, so stay tuned, listeners, we'll be right back to unpack the good news of the gospel and how it connects to everything we've talked about today. Okay.

So picking up where we left off, it's super important to remember, right, that this part of Romans, it's not just about like, you know, the bad stuff, the consequences of rejecting the truth. Right. It's also about, you know, the incredible grace, the grace that's offered in the gospel.

Yeah. So, so it's like, um, like two sides of the same coin, right? We see the weight of sin and then on the other side we see God's love, you know, offering a way out. Yeah, exactly.

Keener really drives that point home. You know, God's righteousness is revealed not just through his judgment, but also through, you know, that offer of salvation through Jesus Christ. Yeah.

It's like a judge, right? Yeah. Not only upholding the law, but, but also offering a pardon, you know, to those who are, who are guilty. Yeah.

That's a really powerful image. It makes me think about how sometimes, you know, we can get so caught up in the rules, the judgment, that we kind of forget about the mercy, you know, the forgiveness that God offers. Yeah.

It's easy to lose sight of that. Absolutely. And Keener, he emphasizes that this forgiveness, this pardon, it's, it's for everybody.

Right, right. It doesn't matter what you've done. He talks about this transformative power of the gospel, you know, its ability to, to break those chains of sin, you know, set us free and, and help us to live, you know, in a way that, that aligns with God's design.

So it's not just about avoiding punishment. Right. It's about becoming something new.

It's about transformation. Right. Yeah.

Yeah. It's like a complete, you know, reset, like, like getting a clean slate, you know, starting over. But, you know, this transformation, it's, it's not like an instant thing.

Right. It's a process. It's a journey.

Right. He calls it sanctification, you know, becoming more and more like Christ. Yeah.

Okay. So, so where does, where does idolatry fit into all of this? We were talking about that earlier, you know, in terms of consequences. Right.

And, and here's where Keener's, you know, deep knowledge of the Bible really shines. He weaves together all these Old Testament references, you know, philosophical insights, cultural context. It's, it's really impressive.

Yeah. And, and he creates this, this really clear picture of, of what Paul is trying to communicate here. Like for instance, he points out that Paul is using this, this language from the Old Testament.

Okay. That was originally used to condemn Israel's sin, you know, is changing God's glory for idols. But now he's using it to describe how the Gentile world is rejecting God.

So he's drawing a parallel there. Exactly. Between ancient Israel and, and the Gentile world.

Right. And that parallel it's, it's crucial because it shows that, you know, both Jews and Gentiles, they, they need God's grace. Yeah.

You know, nobody's righteous on their own. We all fall short. Right.

And that, that brings us right back to the heart of the beast bull, right? We're saved by grace, not by works. Exactly. It's not about, you know, earning our way to God.

It's about accepting that free gift of, of forgiveness, of new life. That's it. And Keener really hits this point hard.

You know, that gift it's, it's there for everyone. Yeah. It doesn't matter, you know, what your past looks like.

It's like that judge, right? Offering that pardon to, to every single person in the courtroom. It doesn't matter what they've done. Wow.

That's, that's pretty radical. It makes you think about, you know, all the ways we try to, to earn God's favor, you know, all the rules, the good deeds. The hoops we jump through.

Yeah. And that's exactly what Keener wants us to see, right? It's not about our efforts. Yeah.

It's about God's grace. It's his love, you know, reaching down to us. Yeah.

Offering that way out of, you know, the mess that we've created. Absolutely. But, but once we've accepted that gift, that grace, how do we, how do we actually live it out? What does that, what does a transformed life actually look like? Well, that's where, you know, the process of sanctification comes in.

It's about allowing the Holy Spirit, you know, to work in us, to change our hearts, to change our minds. Yeah. To be more like, like Jesus.

Right. Right. And that, that takes effort.

You know, Keener challenges us to, to actively resist, you know, the pull of idolatry, the pull of immorality. Yeah. To, to choose truth over falsehood and to let the Holy Spirit, you know, renew our, our minds, our hearts.

Okay. So, so it's not passive. No, it's active.

We have to, we have to participate in this. We gotta be involved. Right.

Right. But how, how do we do that practically? What does that, you know, what does that actually look like, you know, day to day? Well, Keener gives some, some really practical advice here. He tells us to, you know, examine our hearts, to really look inside and see, you know, what idols might we be holding on to, you know, what are the things that, that we're putting before God? Yeah.

What are the things we're turning to, you know, for comfort, for security? Yeah. Instead of, instead of turning to Him. Yeah.

And once we, you know, identify those idols, we can, we can start to break them down. So it's like, like a spiritual inventory almost. Yeah.

Taking stock of, of what's really motivating us. Yeah. And, and being honest with ourselves, you know, about, about the subtle ways that, that idolatry can, you know, kind of creep into our lives.

Yeah. Yeah. And then intentionally choosing.

Right. Okay. To put God first in everything.

But that sounds, that sounds really hard. I mean, it feels like we're just, you know, constantly bombarded with messages telling us to, you know, focus on ourselves. You know, what we want, what we desire, our own happiness.

It's true. We live in a culture, you know, that's just saturated with, with idolatry. Yeah.

But, but that's why Keener reminds us, you know, we're, we're not in this alone. We have, you know, the power of God working in us. Right.

Empowering us, you know, to, to live in a way that honors Him. You know, we have the Holy Spirit to, to guide us, to convict us, to strengthen us. And, and we have the community of believers, you know, to support us, to encourage us.

Yeah. We have each other. And we have God.

And, and as we align ourselves with, with His truth, you know, as we surrender to His grace, we become, you know, living examples of His love and power. Absolutely. It's not just about our own personal transformation.

Right. It's about reflecting God's glory to the world. Right.

Letting our lives be this, this testament to the power of the gospel, to, to change hearts, to change minds. Man, this deep dive into Romans has been, has been so insightful. Yeah.

It's really, it's really challenged me to, you know, examine my own heart, you know, to recommit to living in that freedom, that truth of the gospel. What about you? What's, what's been the biggest thing you've taken away from this so far? For me, it's, it's just been that reminder that God's grace, it's bigger than, than any sin. Yeah.

It doesn't matter how far we've strayed, how many mistakes we've made. Yeah. His love, it's, it's always there offering us a way back.

I love that. And it's so encouraging to know that, you know, even when we, when we mess up, he's, he's still there. He is.

Ready to forgive, to restore. But we've covered a lot and I know we still have, you know, more to unpack what's, what's next on our, our journey through Romans. Remember those ancient philosophers, right? Yeah.

The, the ones who saw that evidence of, of a creator in nature. Well, Keener circles back to that, that idea. Okay.

And leaves us with this, this final thought provoking question. If even they saw evidence of a creator, he says, how does that challenge our understanding of the world, our place in it? That's a great question. It really is.

It really makes you think about, you know, what it means to, to acknowledge a creator, to, to live as his creation. But we'll, we'll have to save that discussion for the, for the last part of our deep dive. So hang in there listeners.

We're going to take a quick break and then we'll be right back to wrap up our exploration of Romans with Dr. Keener. Don't go anywhere. Okay.

So we're back. And that question, you know, the one about the ancient philosophers, it's really stuck with me. It's like Keener saying, Hey, even folks who didn't have the Bible could see there was something more going on, something bigger than us.

Yeah. It makes you think, doesn't it? What are we missing? If we just ignore that? Totally. Yeah.

Like suddenly the stakes are higher. It's not just about being a good person or following rules. Right.

It's bigger than that. It's about understanding our place in this, in this huge story. You know? You got it.

Keener's point is that acknowledging a creator changes everything. Like it reframes our whole perspective, our worldview. Yeah.

Yeah. And it helps us understand, you know, who we are, why we're here, but, but that can be kind of scary. Can it? I mean, if there is a creator, then we're, we're accountable to him.

Yeah. It can feel like a lot of pressure, but, but here's the thing. Keener's not saying it's about living in fear or, or trying to earn God's favor.

Okay. It's about understanding that we're created for a relationship with him and that relationship, it's based on his love and grace, not, not on how well we perform. So, so it's not about being good enough.

It's about, about embracing the relationship he offers. Exactly. It's about recognizing that we, we need him.

You know, we're not self-sufficient and it's about surrendering to his will, trusting that he knows what's best. Okay. That makes sense.

So going back to those ancient philosophers for a sec, you know, they saw evidence of design in nature, but did they, did they figure out who this creator actually was? That's where it gets really interesting. Some of them like Plato thought it was this distant God, you know, one who kind of set the universe in motion, but wasn't really involved in our lives. But others like Aristotle saw God as a more personal being, you know, the source of all goodness, beauty, and all that.

But even with their limited understanding, they knew that acknowledging a creator changed how we live, you know, had big implications. So, so even though they didn't have the full picture like we do with the Bible, they still got that, that core idea. Exactly.

And Kiener uses that to, to challenge us, you know, to think about how seriously we're taking this whole idea of a creator. Are we just saying it or are we letting it change our thinking, our actions? Yeah, yeah. That makes sense.

And this reminds me of something we talked about earlier, you know, the idea of being handed over to sin. Does Kiener have anything more to say about that? He does. And remember, it's not about God forcing us to sin, right? It's more like he lets us, you know, face the consequences of our choices.

And Kiener points out that this can happen not just individually, but on a societal level too. Oh, interesting. So, so like when a whole society rejects God's truth, everyone's affected.

Right. And, and Kiener argues that we're seeing this happen today, you know, as we drift further from God's design, we see families falling apart, more violence, more addiction. Yeah, yeah.

And just this overall sense of emptiness, you know, despair. That's pretty heavy. But, but it makes me think about the hope that the gospel offers, you know, if these problems are because we've rejected God's truth, then embracing that truth could lead to something better.

Right? That's exactly what Kiener's getting at. Turning back to God. It's not just about avoiding punishment.

It's about experiencing true life. Real flourishing. Yeah.



You know, restoring the good stuff, the beauty that was meant to be in creation. It's like, it's like we've been building a house on sand and the gospel is offering a solid rock. Perfect analogy.

It really captures the difference between what the world offers, which fades so quickly and that lasting foundation we find in Christ. Wow. Well, this deep dive into Romans has been amazing.

It's challenged me, made me think, and, and honestly, it's been really encouraging. What are your final thoughts for our listeners as we, as we wrap up here? I think Kiener would want us to remember, you know, this isn't just some intellectual exercise. It's about letting God's truth change us, change the world around us.

Yeah. He'd want us to keep digging, keep asking questions, keep seeking that deeper understanding of God and his plan for us. So to everyone listening, keep going on this journey, pick up Romans, wrestle with these ideas, let God's word speak to you.

You might be surprised what you find. And remember that invitation to experience God's grace. It's always there.

Yeah. No matter where you are on your journey, he's waiting. That's a great reminder.

Thanks for joining us on this deep dive into Romans. My pleasure. We hope you've been challenged, encouraged, and inspired to keep seeking truth.

Until next time, keep diving deeper.