

20. The Book of Romans 1:25-28

Paul's Epistle to the Romans

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In our study in Romans, we are currently in Chapter 1 where we have been looking at the first main section of the book which runs from Chapter 1:18 through Chapter 3:20. We have spent a little extra time on this section by taking some of Paul's statements and exploring them in greater detail—and now as we return to the text let's review briefly so as to refresh our memories.

This first main section falls under the heading of “**Condemnation**” because in it Paul wants to prove that the whole world apart from Christ is condemned by God. Condemnation is a judicial term denoting that fallen man is guilty before a holy, righteous God of violating His laws and condemned (sentenced) to spend eternity in hell for crimes against Him.

Here Paul is acting like a prosecuting attorney who starts by proving that the pagan (the ungodly) is condemned (guilty) before a holy God (the most obvious group of condemned individuals). He then moves to the moralist to show that those who think they're right with God because they live 'moral' lives are hypocrites and guilty.

Finally, he turns his focus on the religionist (in this case those who embrace Judaism) to show that keeping the Law of God (religion) will not save either.

The verdict—all apart from Christ are guilty and condemned!

Why is it so important that Paul begins the main body of this epistle by proving the whole world apart from Jesus is condemned?

It's important because the theme of the book of Romans is the gospel of Jesus Christ (1:16) and yet Paul knows that before a person will see their need for a Savior, they must first be made to see themselves as sinners—which is why Paul starts this section with the “**wrath of God**” (verse 18)

Romans 1:18–24 (NKJV)

¹⁸ For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, ¹⁹ because what may be known of God is manifest in them, for God has shown *it* to them. ²⁰ For since the creation of the world His invisible *attributes* are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made, *even* His eternal power and Godhead, so that they are without excuse, ²¹ because, although they knew God, they did not glorify *Him* as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. ²² Professing to be wise, they became fools, ²³ and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man—and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. ²⁴ Therefore God also gave them up...

The “**Therefore**” in verse 24 was put there by Paul because it is tied to what he has said in verses 18 through 23—but also because of the statement in verse 24 “**God also gave them up.**”

The major point of verses 24-32 is that when sinners willfully abandon God—God will abandon them.

Or in other words, if they don't want God and His truth—He will let them go to pursue other gods and other belief systems (Satan's lies—resulting in the statement, **“and their foolish hearts were darkened.” Verse 21**).

Through the creation God gave them the truth about His existence—but instead of using that information (revelation) to worship the Creator—they willfully rejected Him and instead worshipped the creation.

This is the ultimate foolishness—**“professing to be wise, they became fools (morons)—verse 21”**:

Romans 1:24–28 (NKJV)

²⁴ Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonor their bodies among themselves, ²⁵ who exchanged the truth of God for the 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 vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature. ²⁷ Likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful, and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due. ²⁸ And even as they did not like to retain God in *their* knowledge, God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting...

In verse 18 Paul says, **“For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men...”**

The way God's wrath is being revealed today is spoken of in verses 24, 26, and 28—three times he says, **“God gave them up”, “God gave them up”, “God gave them over”** (same phrase in the Greek)

In these verses (24, 26, and 28), the Greek verb Paul uses is ‘paradidomi’—which is an *intense* verb in the Greek.

In the N.T. it's used of giving one's body to be burned (1 Corinthians 13:3)—and further is used 3 times of Jesus giving Himself up to death.

But the word is also used in the New Testament in the judicial sense of a person being committed to prison or to judgment—which is how Paul uses it in Romans 1. In other words, God gave them up to punishment, to imprisonment, and to painful circumstances (the painful consequences of their sinful deeds).

In fact, the punishment is that God gave them up!

God abandoned them (gave them up/over) to their own sinful desires and actions which brought consequences into their lives that God wanted to spare them from—

Psalms 81:11–12 (NKJV)

¹¹ “But My people would not heed My voice, And Israel would *have* none of Me. ¹² So I gave them over to their own stubborn heart, To walk in their own counsels.

- But isn't that a good thing?
- I mean isn't independence from God what man has wanted since the Garden of Eden?
- Aren't God's commandments restrictive, repressive, and the greatest hinderance to man's freedom and happiness (as so many unbelievers are prone to think)?

Here's the hard lesson that fallen men and women who run from God into sin in the lusts of their heart's eventually learn—it brings pleasure for a 'season' but will inevitably lead to the *opposite* of everything they're after.

- Instead of **joy**—there is sorrow.
- Instead of **peace**—there is restlessness and unfulfillment.
- Instead of **freedom**—there is bondage and misery.

But I want you to understand that when the text says that '**God gave them up**'—it doesn't mean that 'God gave up on them!'

This is not the final act on God's part that forever seals a person's eternal judgment in hell. Yes, if they don't want God ruling over their lives; if they refuse to live by God's righteous standards—He will at one point let them go to do their own thing.

He will let them indulge their flesh so that the consequences of their actions will hopefully bring them to their senses where they will repent and come to God—which seems to be the whole point in Jesus' parable of the prodigal son in Luke 15:11-32.

Jeremiah 2:19 (NKJV)

¹⁹ Your own wickedness will correct you, And your backslidings will rebuke you. Know therefore and see that *it is* an evil and bitter *thing* That you have forsaken the Lord your God, And the fear of Me *is not in you,*" Says the Lord God of hosts.

Isaiah 19:22 (NKJV)

²² And the Lord will strike Egypt, He will strike and heal *it*; they will return to the Lord, and He will be entreated by them and heal them.

1 Corinthians 6:9–11 (NKJV)

⁹ Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, ¹⁰ nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God. ¹¹ And such were some of you. But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of our God.

[The same list as in Romans 1—and yet these folks have been redeemed!]

2 Peter 3:9 (NKJV)

⁹ The Lord is not slack concerning *His* promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.

Yet tragically, many never will learn from their sins and turn to God but instead will die in their sins—which is absolutely NOT what God wants:

Ezekiel 18:30–32 (NKJV)

³⁰ "Therefore I will judge you, O house of Israel, every one according to his ways," says the Lord God. "Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. ³¹ Cast away from you all the

transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? ³² For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies,” says the Lord God. “Therefore turn and live!”

This is the sad reality of the story of redemption (the theme of the Bible)—Jesus died so that the whole world could be saved (1 John 2:2)—and yet only some will be saved.

But for those who go to hell—it will be their fault—not God’s fault.

As Donald Grey Barnhouse put it:

“Man turned away from God and plunged toward himself. Grace pursued him, grace called to him, grace pleaded with him, grace died for him. But the man continued to lunge away from the Creator, and finally the Creator relinquished His grasp and the man fell into the bottomless pit of his own horrible being, there to remain ingrown and inbred forever!”

When Paul says that **“God gave them up to uncleanness in the lusts of their hearts” (v.24)**—the Greek word for ‘**lusts**’ is: ‘epithumia’ which speaks of a ‘*driving passionate destructive desire for forbidden pleasure.*’

As one author put it—

“It’s the desire that drives people to do shameless acts. It’s the way of life of a person who is so immersed in the world and the gratification of self that all awareness of God is lost.”

We are seeing this scenario being played out every day in our society with the current trans-mania movement—women dressing like men calling themselves ‘men’ and men dressing like women and calling themselves ‘women.’ Instead of being pitied and offered counseling for mental sickness—they’re invited to the White House to be celebrated!

We see shameful acts on display with things like drag queen story hours for kids—and perverted, sick and blasphemous acts being done to a fake “Jesus” on a fake cross during Gay Pride events. I mean, the level of perversity we are witnessing in our country is absolutely astonishing—all because people have rejected God in their desire to live contrary to His laws and satisfy their base (fleshly) desires.

When Paul talked about the **“Lusts of the heart” (verse 24)**—it is reminiscent of Jesus’ words:

Mark 7:20–23 (NKJV)

²⁰ [Jesus] ...said, “What comes out of a man, that defiles a man. ²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, ²² thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lewdness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness. ²³ All these evil things come from within and defile a man.”

Now the ‘**lusts of the heart**’ works its way out in the statement—**“to dishonor their bodies among themselves.”**

Here Paul has sexual sin in mind—

1 Corinthians 6:13, 18 (NKJV)

...Now the body is not for sexual immorality but for the Lord, and the Lord for the body...

¹⁸ Flee sexual immorality. Every sin that a man does is outside the body, but he who commits sexual immorality sins against his own body.

1 Thessalonians 4:3–5 (NKJV)

³ For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you should abstain from sexual immorality; ⁴ that each of you should know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor, ⁵ not in passion of lust, like the Gentiles who do not know God...

Our society is absolutely obsessed with sex and the human body—it's everywhere, in advertisement, movies, TV shows, music videos, magazines—and especially on the internet.

Internet pornography has destroyed many men, their marriages, and their entire families—

Matthew 5:28 (NKJV)

²⁸ [Jesus]...But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.

You know, I'm not really sure how many Christians today take this seriously let alone those in the world.

The problem is we are living in a sex crazed society where sex is being used to sell everything from toothpaste to toasters. You can't go anywhere today without being bombarded with sexual images of some kind or another (even mannequins at the mall are now anatomically correct).

Advertisers are constantly bombarding us with sexual stimuli that is designed to arouse a strong desire (often a sexually motivated desire) for their products—and the more our society accepted these practices, the more sex-crazed our society has become. It's in no small part due to what some have called the 'Playboy philosophy' that has permeated our society.

The '*Playboy philosophy*' is nothing more than a perversion which degrades something God intended as beautiful and holy between a husband and wife—and it turns it into a purely biological function without moral consequences.

Hugh Hefner (who died in 2017) said, "*Why get so upset about sex—it's only a biological necessity like eating, drinking and sleeping.*"

That attitude is nothing new—it comes right out of Greco-Roman paganism.

The attitude in the first century Greco-Roman world was that they looked at sex the same way they looked at eating, drinking, and sleeping—it was just another biological function to be satisfied without any moral implications whatsoever.

But you see the inevitable consequence of that philosophy is that you dehumanize women—and then when coupled with pornography—they are turned into mere objects for sexual gratification.

If you would like to know more about what it means to be a Jesus-follower—please reach out to us. It would be our greatest privilege to lead you into a saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

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