



SCRIPTURE STUDIES: ROMANS 1:24-32

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Romans 1:24-32 (ESV) -- Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 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. For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passion. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 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 received in themselves the due penalty for their error. 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. They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless. Though they know God's righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.

Scriptural Context

- Paul is forming in argument in chapters 1-3. He is going to show us that all stand condemned in chapters 1 and 2 in order to present us with the Gospel in chapter 3. Think of chapters 1 and 2 as defining the illness and 3 as offering the cure.
- His conclusion to the argument is in 3:9-19

Romans 3:9-19 (ESV) -- What then? Are we Jews any better off? No, not at all. For we have already charged that all, both Jews and Greeks, are under sin, as it is written: "None is righteous, no, not one; no one understands; no one seeks for God. All have turned aside; together they have become worthless; no one does good, not even one." "Their throat is an open grave; they use their tongues to deceive." "The venom

of asps is under their lips." "Their mouth is full of curses and bitterness." "Their feet are swift to shed blood; in their paths are ruin and misery, and the way of peace they have not known." "There is no fear of God before their eyes." Now we know that whatever the law says it speaks to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be stopped, and the whole world may be held accountable to God.

- **Bad news first.** If I told you, "Good news I've had lunch today and I'm sleeping in a warm bed tonight." you might think, "ok...that's nice." But if I first told you that a week ago my house burned down, we lost everything, no one would help us and my family and I have been sleeping outside in the park and eating out of trash cans for a week..." Your reaction to me telling you my good news would be totally different. This is what Paul is doing for us here in chapters 1 and 2. He's setting you up to be amazed at the grace of God in the face of Jesus Christ in chapter 3.
- **Let's reverse engineer the argument**
 - In chapter 2 Paul will show us that both Jew and Gentile are condemned. God's covenant people and those outside of the covenant.
 - In our passage in chapter 1 he zooms in on individual man and shows how and why man is individually and universally accountable and condemned.
 - We could state his argument like this:
 - P1 - All **individual** men know their Creator and refuse to give Him the honor and thanks He is due. They suppress the truth and embrace lies because they love their sin. They stand accountable and condemned.
 - P2 - All **types** of men know their Creator and still refuse to honor and thank Him.
 - C - There are no exceptions or distinctions. All stand condemned in need of salvation.
 - "Sin is any lack of conformity to God's will in attitude, thought, or action, whether committed actively or passively. The center of all sin is autonomy, which is the replacing of God with self. Always closely associated with sin are its products – pride, selfishness, idolatry, and lack of peace." p.454 MacArthur's *Biblical Doctrine*

Proposition

“Man’s total corruption – mind, heart and body is his present judgment. His foolish mind, darkened heart and shameful acts are the consequences of rejecting His Creator.”

Here’s how we’re going to get there:

- “All men know their Creator, reject their Creator, and choose to worship the creation over Him. As a result, they are given over to the sinful desires of their hearts. To do this, God simply removes Himself and His restraining grace from their lives. The end result is a present judgment as well as a coming final judgment. Man’s total corruption – mind, heart and body is that present judgment.”

Exegesis

Romans 1:24-25 (ESV) -- Therefore God gave them up in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, to the dishonoring of their bodies among themselves, 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.

- What does Paul mean when he says that God “gave them up”?
 - See the parallel in Psalm 81:8-13
 - We are all bent towards sin. It is common grace, that is grace given to all people, believers and unbelievers alike that restrains our sin. God does this through conscience, family, community and government. These institutions don’t cure sin but they do curb it – which is a grace of God to us.
 - Total depravity does not mean that we are as bad as we could be, it means that we are bad to the core, prior to coming to Christ, as we’ll see.
 - “Gave them up” means that God removed His restraining hand. He gave them what they wanted.
 - Evil as a privation.
 - Evil is the absence of good (Augustine held this view)
 - “If a man will not worship God as God, he is so left to himself that he throws away his very manhood.” – John Wesley
 - We’ll come back to this idea later.
- **Lusts of their hearts to impurity**

- Lust in this context does have a connection to sexual desire but it's important to note that the word is broader. It is a strong desire, when it's for something forbidden, it is almost animalistic. Sometimes translated as passions. Lust is the fuel of sin. Whether it's lust for material things, approval, power, pleasure or sex. God is removing His restraint from that fuel source. It's fairly common in pop culture vampire stories to have a vampire that is the protagonist – the unlikely bad, good guy. Usually they take some kind of substitute for blood so they don't turn evil and begin attacking humans. In that story line, a conflict that arises in the plot is often that they get cut off from that substitute and what do they do? It's almost like the lion in Madagascar when he begins to turn wild – His pupils dilate and he looks around at his friends and they all look like walking steaks. I'm making light of it, but this is really the picture here. Those base desires, sinful instincts within us are deeper than we know. You are all much darker and much more capable of the most horrible atrocities than you have any idea of. If you are a Christian, you have been made new and those desires are there but they have no power over you. That's Romans 6. But for the unbeliever, it is nothing but for the kindness of God that there is any restraint upon your heart at all. The more you openly reject Him the less restraint remains.

- “So that thus it is, that natural men are held in the hand of God over the pit of hell; they have deserved the fiery pit, and are already sentenced to it; and God is dreadfully provoked, his anger is as great towards them as to those that are actually suffering the executions of the fierceness of his wrath in hell, and they have done nothing in the least to appease or abate that anger, neither is God in the least bound by any promise to hold them up one moment; the devil is waiting for them, hell is gaping for them, the flames gather and flash about them, and would fain lay hold on them and swallow them up; the fire pent up in their own hearts is struggling to break out; and they have no interest in any Mediator, there are no means within reach that can be any security to them. In short they have no refuge, nothing to take hold of; all that preserves them every moment is the mere arbitrary will, and uncovenanted, unobliged forbearance of an incensed God.”

- This is the true reality of fallen man. They are all in desperate need of God's forbearance and restraint.

- **Dishonoring their bodies amongst themselves**

- **(V.21)** Their minds became futile and their hearts were darkened. We'll see the heart issue in the word passions throughout our text.
- Now we address the body. This is a statement of scope. That is why Paul gives the vice list in (V.32). His point here is that sin corrupts the whole being – your mind, heart and body. When he brings up homosexuality in a moment, he is bringing it up under this idea. Sometimes this passage is used to show homosexuality as something that brings about the wrath of God, which is very offensive to some. While that's true, he's actually saying something far more offensive. He's not saying homosexuality brings God's judgement. He's saying that it *is* God's judgment.
- Now, before anyone accuses Paul of being a bigot, consider the fact that he already called you a moron and said you were perverted. That's what the word in (V.22) means. In the Greek it is pronounced "more-rhino"
- Until we see homosexual behavior as behavior and not an identity, we will continue to approach it in an insufficient, ineffective way.
- Paul is not hating on people practicing homosexuality any more than he is hating on people that practice idolatry. He is setting up the diagnosis and symptoms of this fatal illness of sin so he can offer a cure.

Romans 1:25 (ESV) -- 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.

- **Exchanged the truth about God for a lie**

- We saw this last week in (V.23), the idea of exchanging comes up 4 times in Romans 1 and the idea of God giving over comes up 3.
- Every time "God gave them up/over" comes up it's related to idolatry. In (V.23), they worshiped the creature instead and exchanged God's glory for corruptible things.
- Here in (V.25) they exchange the truth about God for a lie.
 - Not the truth about a "creator" but the truth about the one true God. He has revealed Himself to them through nature, not some abstract concept of a god. Look back at vv. 19-20 – **HIS** attributes, **HIS** eternal power and divine nature.
 - We don't stand condemned outside of Christ for not being theists. We stand condemned for knowing and rejecting Yahweh!

- God takes it seriously when we take His truth and reject it. Look at **2 Thess. 2:9-12** -- *The coming of the lawless one is by the activity of Satan with all power and false signs and wonders, and with all wicked deception for those who are perishing, because they refused to love the truth and so be saved. Therefore God sends them a strong delusion, so that they may believe what is false, in order that all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.*
 - This might seem harsh, but again the idea is not God forcing wickedness on anyone. He is simply giving us what we want.
- **Worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator**
 - We addressed this back in (V.23). The only thing we'll say about this is what Brandon taught about the religious nature of man.
 - You see when man falls, he retains much. But none of it in a true way. Man still seeks to love and be loved, to live in peace and harmony, to do good to others, but all in marred, broken, self-seeking ways. The image of God is not removed, but it utterly defaced. This is what happens with worship. We maintain our fundamental desire to worship, it's hardwired into us, but we pervert it.

Romans 1:26-27 (ESV) -- *For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions. For their women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature; 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 themselves the due penalty for their error.*

- Here we go. We could spend the whole hour talking about the nature of homosexuality and how we should address that – and I'd be more than happy to discuss that with any of you. It is a subject close to my family and close to my heart. But, for the sake of time and the purpose of this study, we'll only go as far as this text takes us tonight.
- **For this reason God gave them up to dishonorable passions**
 - Remember your basic Bible skills here, whenever you see "therefore, however, for this reason" etc. you know you need to find what it's referring back to. In this case it is the previous verse – exchanged the truth for a lie and worshiped the creature instead of the Creator, which are really one and the same thing.

- Remember God giving them up is always related to idolatry. It was the same back in Psalm 81 that we referenced earlier.
- Dishonorable passions – degrading, disgraceful. This is not a pejorative. This is not an insult towards same sex attraction. This is descriptive of what that passion is to the one feeling it. These disordered passions (remember what we said about lust earlier this word is related but it carries with it the connotation of affection. Where the other word was a primal, base desire, this word is a loving of the desire.) You see how this ties to same sex attraction? How it ties to the way they see their attraction as an identity? It's because they love the desire. While many who practice homosexuality don't choose the attraction, they still choose the behavior. But we ought not condemn them for the presence of the desire any more than we ought to condemn you for the presence of your desire to have your brother's wife, or house or boat. You understand that in your life what matters is what you do with that wicked desire inherent in your flesh, indulge it or resist it. It is the same with same sex attraction. In many ways they cannot help the desire, it is part of this judgment pronounced on humanity. And just like the fact that not all are plagued with the same temptations, so not all are plagued with this. It is a difficult burden for many who seek to put their flesh to death.
- **Women exchanged natural relations for those that are contrary to nature**
 - Natural Law - "the law implanted in nature by the Creator which rational creatures can discern by the light of natural reason." – Oxford dictionary of the Christian church
 - Paul often appeals to Natural Law, Jesus appealed to Natural Law "does not even nature teach us that..."
 - Man has a teleology - a specific design and purpose for which he was created. One reason that homosexuality is sinful is that it violates God's created, ordained and designed purpose for man and woman. Now you may have heard someone say that something "goes against nature" and perhaps that did not sound like a very convincing argument. But consider that the root of this is unfettered autonomy. It is directly related to exchanging the truth, worshiping the creature and casting off God. When we sin against natural law, we are being the clay saying to the Potter, "why have you made me this way?"
- **Men likewise** gave up natural relations with women and were **consumed with passion for one another**, men committing **shameless** acts with men

- “Men likewise, and passion for one another” are the two phrases that destroy most “Christian” pro homosexuality arguments.
 - Not Pederasty “for one another”
 - If it were, it would not refer to women. Also, Paul would have addressed it as pederasty specifically.
- Consumed – to be put to fire, inflamed with their passions one for another.

Romans 1:27 (ESV) -- ...men committing shameless acts with men and receiving themselves the due penalty for their error.

- Shameless – indecent, the idea of something that someone should be embarrassed or ashamed of, think of the certain brazen abortion advocates who boldly say that they “love killing babies.” This is the feel of the word.
- Receiving the due penalty in themselves – this could refer to the passions themselves that they are plagued by or some spiritual, emotional or physical malady caused by the continued act of homosexuality. Of which there is no shortage of statistics.

Romans 1:28 (ESV) -- 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.

- Here we have the beginning of Paul’s concluding statement. He restates the pattern of cause and effect we’ve seen through the text.
- Man does have knowledge, refuses knowledge, hates truth, worships creation over the Creator and God lets him have his way.
- The result is corruption of the whole being mind, heart and body.
- Debased – depraved. Used of metal refinement. When the metal is heated and tested, this is the worthless impurity that rises to the surface and is discarded. This is what we call “the Noetic effect of the fall” in theology.
- Ought not to be done – homosexuality is used as the pinnacle of the corruption of the body because
 - Contrary to nature - only a foolish mind would think it a good thing
 - Makes impossible the very purpose for which mankind is on the earth – to be fruitful and multiply.
 - It is not what is best for our flourishing, individually or corporately. Historically, societies that devolve into blatant, open sexual immorality are in the death throes.

Romans 1:29-31 (ESV) -- *They were filled with all manner of unrighteousness, evil, covetousness, malice. They are full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, maliciousness. They are gossips, slanderers, haters of God, insolent, haughty, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, foolish, faithless, heartless, ruthless.*

- Filled with all manner of unrighteousness – again, Paul is presenting us with the scope of the problem. Like in Romans 3, this list is not an exhaustive list nor does everyone suffer the same way from the items on the list. He’s making sure no one thinks they have an out.
 - Edwards again, “All wicked men’s pains and contrivance they use to escape hell, while they continue to reject Christ, and so remain wicked men, don’t secure ‘em from hell one moment. Almost every natural man that hears of hell flatters himself that he shall escape it; he depends upon himself for his own security, he flatters himself in what he has done, in what he is now doing, or what he intends to do; every one lays out matters in his own mind how he shall avoid damnation, and flatters himself that he contrives well for himself, and that his schemes won’t fail.” – No one escapes this indictment apart from Christ.
 - Gossips and disobedient to parents – All sin is sin against God. David in Psalm 51.

Romans 1:32 (ESV) -- *Though they know God’s righteous decree that those who practice such things deserve to die, they not only do them but give approval to those who practice them.*

- How do they know? We’ve established that some already but Brandon will go further into that in Chapter 2.
- Deserve to die – meaning, rejection of your Creator makes your life worthless. When you cast off the very Maker and Sustainer of your very existence, you don’t have a right to exist.
- Give approval
 - Isaiah 5:20. “Woe to those who call evil good and good evil, who put darkness for light and light for darkness, who put bitter for sweet and sweet for bitter!”
 - So brave, so heroic – This is a product of depraved minds, lustful hearts and dishonored bodies.

Conclusion

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“Man’s total corruption – mind, heart and body is his present judgment. His foolish mind, darkened heart and shameful acts are the consequences of rejecting His Creator.”

Here’s how we got there:

- “All men know their Creator, reject their Creator, and choose to worship the creation over Him. As a result, they are given over to the sinful desires of their hearts. To do this, God simply removes Himself and His restraining grace from their lives. The end result is a present judgment as well as a coming final judgment. Man’s total corruption – mind, heart and body is that present judgment.”

Believer, **Romans 6:20-22** -- *For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. But what fruit were you getting at that time from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the end of those things is death. But now that you have been set free from sin and have become slaves of God, the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life.*

- Thank God that Rom. 1 is no longer a description of you. Not because you made yourself better but because He set you free.
- Have compassion on the ones who have not yet been set free, knowing their condition. Don’t be surprised when unbelievers live out this passage. This is what God has said we should expect. But don’t see them as enemies to fight, but captives to be set free by the power of the Gospel. That is where Paul is taking all of this.

Unbeliever, you can be set free. It’s the very thing Jesus loves doing...