

Romans 1:24-32

Romans 1:24**Therefore**- Because mankind had enough knowledge to serve the one true God but determined to do something else, because of that fact, therefore **God gave them up**. Notice that it does not say that God forced them to do evil that they had no desire to do. No, not at all. He gave them up to do that which they wanted to do. He removed his restraining hand from them.

Here are some other places where this word is used-

John 19:30 So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, "It is finished!" And bowing His head, He **gave up** His spirit. Christ gave up His Spirit to His Father's care. He made a rational decision and gave up His spirit.

Acts 7: 41And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. 42Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, Here again we see that these people wanted strongly to do something and God gave them up to it.

Galatians 2: 20I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me. Here Christ gave himself up, same greek word, for all believers.

Ephesians 5: 25Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her,

It is interesting that this word does not denote that something was taken from God. It says that He gave them over. Had he wanted to stop any of these actions at any time, He could have. But instead he willingly gave up himself for our benefit. He also willingly gave the wicked over to their wickedness.

This "giving them up" that God does is worthy of consideration. These people that are given up lose the ability by their devotion to wickedness to view nature and make sense. They get lower than animals, lower than

instinct. Instinct would be a step up. It becomes normal for them to become abnormal. And they can't even discern the difference.

God also gave them up **to uncleanness,**

akatharsia is a work of the flesh, it is of the unregenerate person who is subject to natural desire. This word is frequently sexual in nature.

in the lusts of their hearts- God gave people up to develop the perverted strong desires of their hearts.

to dishonor their bodies - Mankind tends to think that mankind dishonors itself when it submits to the confines of an absolute God. They rebel against this constraint as if it is a virtue to do so. They hope to honor themselves. But ultimately that cannot be done. When you dishonor the creator, you will naturally dishonor the creation next. You cannot separate God's intention for mankind from mankind and maintain any honor. We don't know what honor is except in relation to our creator. Our rebellion can only lead to humiliation, whether we have the sense or not to call it that.

among themselves- The sexual sins we are about to have exposed in this passage cannot be practiced without partners. These folks would not describe their behavior as dishonoring. They would focus on the romantic and the human interest side of things. But from where God sits, there are no redeeming virtues of this activity. It is sin. It is vile. And it is repulsive to God.

25who exchanged the truth of God for the lie,- There is only one God and there is only one way to serve Him. Christ is the way the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Him. Everything else is part of THE LIE. Mankind wants to blither on and on about their genius in creativity. It should be humbling for us to realize that God puts all alternatives to true worship under a single

heading- THE LIE. Islam, Buddhism, Mormonism, Jehovah's Witness, Scientology, Humanism, Paganism, Naturalism, or Materialism... They are all just THE LIE. The context we are studying is idolatry. There is a sense that anything other than the true worship is idolatry.

Something else to notice in this passage is that you cannot depart from God's Truth without making an exchange. There are not multiple options. There are only 2. Truth or the Lie. The world we live in wants to believe there are many many true paths. No exchange is necessary they say. Diversity is good they say. Exclusivity of truth is bad they say. But scripture tells us here that to follow any form of the lie, an exchange must take place. To follow a lie you must trade in the truth. You cannot hold two mutually contradictory positions.

and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, - All of life is an act of worship. There is a narrow way to serve God. There is a broad way to not serve and worship God. In fact, any way but the true way is no act of service to God at all. If I choose MY WAY to worship God I choose to worship and serve the creature. I am worshipping and serving the creativity of man. I have elevated the creature over the Creator.

So we see the options. Truth VS Lie We can serve Creator or Creature.

who is blessed forever. Amen.-

To me it looks like at this point Paul breaks out into a praise of the true God. It looks like he cannot deal with the spectacle of mankind's treatment of God without proclaiming the truth that this one true God is worthy of all praise. No matter what man decides, this does not change the worthiness of God to be praised. It is God who is blessed and worthy of blessing. No matter what man may say or do.

26For this reason- Paul comes back to his topic. A good question here is, is he simply restating what he is saying, or is he plowing deeper? I can't tell. He delves into his topic 3 times in this passage.

Since man has made his vote against God, since he has preferred false worship to true worship, since he prefers the Lie to the Truth, Since that is true God gives them up to more of what they want.

God gave them up to vile passions.

Vile- dishonour, ignominy, disgrace God gives up mankind to the dishonor they so long for. It is not just that they have passions, but that their passions are vile. This will always be the case with us when we separate ourselves from God. Even if the passions begin as natural passions, hunger, thirst, avoidance of pain, desire for comfort, they will grow into perversions, into something that is a disgrace to our humanness.

We must always keep our passions submitted to the Word of God. Without that submission we will find that natural passions turn to vile passions. The desire for sustenance will turn into greed. The desire for sex will turn into a perversion of sex or an obsession with it. The desire for food will turn into gluttony. Our flesh cannot be trusted, but God's word can be.

Note that this is the second mention of God giving them over.

For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature.- So when God's authority is abandoned and when God removes His restraining hand from man, vile passions will escalate. The extent of the depravity moves to the unthinkable. Even the women abandon normal sexual practice. In scripture God couples male sexual practice with responsibility. Men are expected to provide security for those they mate with. The scriptural expectations regarding women tend to be more on the purity

side. A woman is to keep herself pure. Women have more natural obvious consequences with sexual behavior. So it is only natural that they would be more restrained and careful than men. The wording here clearly emphasizes the depth of this depravity when even women lead in perversion. Even the women degrade themselves. We aren't given reasons in this passage why a woman leading in perversion is even more startling than a man. Whatever the case, all we know for sure here is that the perversion is against nature. The practice is one that goes against the design that is apparent for normal sex between a man and a woman. They exchanged the normal and natural for the abnormal and perverted. Maybe it was perverted practice by men with women. Maybe it is women with women in a homosexual practice. We can't know for sure.

27 Likewise- The likewise could mean just as women practice homosexuality, likewise so do the men. Or it could mean as women carried out their perverted practices with men, likewise the men became perverted toward each other.

also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust for one another, men with men committing what is shameful,

Verse 27 clearly portrays the current state of homosexuals in our country. They burn with lust for each other, they abandon the natural use of the woman, and what they do is shameful. They should be ashamed. But instead they are proud of what they do. And it is getting to the place where they will not tolerate anyone who speaks the truth to the matter. They will not allow their sin to be called sinful or their shame to be called shameful or their practice to be called perversion.

and receiving in themselves the penalty of their error which was due.

What is the penalty that they have earned and deserve? First they have the shame that their shameful behavior brings on them. Whether or not they will discern the truth of their situation, they will still feel the consequences. And it will bear itself out in physical, mental and psychological problems.

There are few sins that have such obvious and destructive consequences in this world as homosexuality among men. The life expectancy for a homosexual man is 42 years old. That is 20 years shorter than for a man who is not a homosexual.

The most notable apparent penalty is the death sentence of AIDS that is highly contagious among homosexual men. This is a disease that clearly targets homosexual men, yet the media is not likely to ever tell the whole truth about the statistics. You would think that people would avoid the sin just given the physical danger. But they are committed to this sin.

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;

This verse contains a play on words. It is between "did not like to retain God" and "debased mind".

Like- dokimazo

- 1) to test, examine, prove, scrutinize (to see whether a thing is genuine or not), as metals
- 2) to recognize as genuine after examination, to approve, deem worthy

Debased- adokimos

- 1) not standing the test, not approved
 - 1a) properly used of metals and coins
- 2) that which does not prove itself such as it ought
 - 2a) unfit for, unproved, spurious, reprobate

Paul is saying that since these men reprobated the knowledge of God, God gave them over to a reprobate mind. Since they did not think what God said was good, he gave them over to a mind that is bad.

Men naturally think rebellion is smart and man is in control of his destiny. They think as scripture says, "I am and there is none beside me." We in our sin natures loft ourselves up in our own esteem and expect no external supernatural consequences to our actions. We are prone to expect no judgment for rebellion.

But that is not the truth. We are free to reprobate the knowledge of God if we like. We can refuse to acknowledge the existence of God and His right to rule our lives. We are free to fill our minds with all kinds of wacky theories to avoid the obvious truth.

And what will God do? He will give us over to the insanity we have chosen. He will not intervene to correct the position we have committed ourselves to. He will give us over to our reprobate thinking, our reprobate mind to do those things that are not fitting, that aren't seemly, that are far below how humans were designed to act.

What is fitting for a human to do?

It is fitting to behave according to the design of the creator. It is fitting for us all to recognize the right of God to rule our lives and to submit to all that we know of His Lordship. It is fitting for us to thank our creator for creating us and recognizing his claim over our lives. It is fitting for us to act according to the clear functions he has created us with.

It is not fitting for us to act in a way contrary to the way He has designed us. It is not fitting for us to do whatever we feel like doing with God's creation or His creatures.

Now the next list is a list of the things that are not fitting. Recently when I was in New Orleans I spoke to the concierge at our hotel about the sites to see in the city. He

handed me a map. I asked him if there were places we should Not go. He took the map and drew a line right through the middle of the city from one side to the other. Then he wrote in the northern section- BAD. These were the places we should not go. This passage this morning is the map that God would write across the top- BAD Don't go there.

Most scholars agree that the list that follows can't be broken into clear categories. The first 4 sins are general sins and it says they are being filled with these sins.

Then there are 5 more sins that they are already full of.

Then comes libel and slander

Then extreme forms of pride

Then inventors of evil and rebellious to parents

Then four negatives that JB Phillips calls without brains, honor love and pity.

A very apt application to us would be for us to listen carefully to this list. Remember, this is God's bad list. These are things that should have no place in our lives. We know that it is God's will for our lives for us to leave these sins. So let's pay careful attention to each sin and resolve to stop committing those that we know applies to us. Let's call in whoever we need to call in to get the help to overcome.

29 being filled – the verb tense is to be filled and continue to be filled. This is a process in life, not a one time event.

These people are not just committing these sins, they are being filled with these sins.

with all unrighteousness- This means all manner of sin and wickedness in general. Most anything would fit under this broad heading. It is a very fitting description of human behavior.

sexual immorality- pornea- this includes all kinds of evil sexual activity, deviations from normal and natural sexual activity under the proper bonds of marriage. By the way, the gentiles did not usually regard this type of thing as a sin.

Wickedness- This is a general term for evil, normally evil intended and carried out toward others.

covetousness,- Covetousness is a desire for more.. it is generally exercised without concern for the principles of God. It can be expanded to mean every insatiable lust.

Maliciousness- Inward viciousness, a revengeful disposition. A desire to do harm, wickedness that is not ashamed to break laws

full of envy- Discontent and jealousy at the prosperity and well being of others. Unhappiness with the superior knowledge, learning, wealth, position, happiness or any other positive condition of another.

Murder- Manslaughter that is done maliciously or from selfish reasons.

Strife- contention, strife, wrangling. This is strife about words more than things, for vain glory and victory rather than truth.

Deceit- craft, deceit, guile Fraud or falsehood- making large pretences to morality when truly vile.

evil-mindedness- Putting the worst interpretations on words and conduct of others. Very ill manners without courteousness or affability. Bad character.

they are **whisperers**- Gossip or secret slander of men, making mischief among friends by privately suggesting and insinuating things in the mind of one to prejudice them against another. JBPhillips calls it whisperers behind doors.

30backbiters- Public slander, public defamation. This is still done indirectly rather than face to face, but it is done publicly. JBPhillips calls this stabbers in the back

haters of God- Deniers of the being and providence of God

violent- insolence, insulting and abusive conduct. One who uplifted with pride either heaps insulting language upon others or does them some shameful act of wrong.

Proud- egotism, excessive self esteem and conceit of natural knowledge, learning, eloquence and vain philosophy. An overweening estimate of one's own means or merits.

Boasters- vocal claim to their supposed superiority over others, attributing all positive traits to one's self as the origin.

inventors of evil things- invents things for evil use. Of evil schemes of morality, philosophy and of evil practices.

disobedient to parents- this is a characteristic of all rebels. Note that it is acting contrary to the light of nature. If God is the creator, we should submit to Him due to the fact that he put us here. Well our parents were also part of that process and logical thinking would have us obliged to our parents at least to some degree.

31undiscerning- This word is the same as foolish in verse 21. It is an ignorance in spiritual things, undiscerning of God, His nature and worship.

Untrustworthy- Covenant breaker- not true to contracts or commitments. No regard for private or public contracts.

Unloving- without natural affection as evidenced in the desertion and destruction of children by parents or parents by children.

Unforgiving- implacable, refusing to be reconciled to one when an offense has been committed. Holding an unyielding desire for revenge. Not allowing reconciliation once it is offered.

Unmerciful- No pity or compassion to persons in distress.

32who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death,

Remember- they are not innocent because they are not ignorant. These people know the righteous judgment of God. This can be known by observation or by God's revealed word or a combination of both. We are God's. He gave us life. He gave us a function. If we go against that function we deserve for that God to take away that life that He gave us. It was never our life. We did not provide it. If it was given to us for a purpose, we owe it to our creator to live according to that purpose.

not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.

Here is the bottom line. Our problem is a heart problem. We know what the score is. But we don't care. Our desire to live our own life and our own way is so strong that we not only rebel but we show pleasure when others rebel as well. Application point- do you ever encourage others to do the same evil you have done? Can you see the implications? We should have nothing but disdain to see a brother or sister or even an unsaved person in the throes of sin. It should raise an alarm in our souls that call us to immediate action to minister to this person. May we flee any known sin and never encourage another human to follow us in our iniquity for our own selfish satisfaction.

Maybe the best application for us is to avoid sin that we either enjoy or put up with at a distance. How many acts of sin and blasphemy and dishonor to God will we put up with in media before we say, this is enough? How long will we go on before we discern the evil which is clearly in front of us by our own choice? What excuse will we have for the hours we have wasted in backhandedly approving of evil? It would be better that we did nothing with the time than to fill it with that which God stands against.