

The Consequences of Rejecting God

Romans 1:24-32

Romans 1:24-32 - *“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; ²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, ³⁰ backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful; ³² who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them.”

Background Notes

The last half of Romans 1 is not a pleasant passage of Scripture -- in fact some people don't like to read it at all. But we **must** read it, and we must understand it if we are going to know the teaching of God's Word. It's foundational. The Bible teaches that **everyone is guilty** before God! God is infinitely and holy and righteous and every person falls far short of His holy standards. That is precisely the point that the apostle Paul is proving in the first three chapters of Romans, and he will conclude his argument with that well known verse, Romans 3:23: *“for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God...”*

After the conclusion that all have sinned, Paul will go on to show God's wonderful plan of salvation in the Lord Jesus Christ. No one can "make it" on their own with God! All people are guilty before God, and all people have fallen short of the glory of God. But God has provided a plan of salvation, and we must accept God's plan of salvation.

A logical question might be raised at this point. What about the people who have not heard about God? Does God hold ignorant people accountable? What is the Bible's answer here? The answer is that **no one is ignorant!** Romans 1 teaches that God has given all people plenty of evidence of Himself in the creation all around us, so that no one has an excuse. Mankind, however, has turned away from that evidence and rejected God. Here in this last section of Romans 1 we see the sad consequences of rejecting God.

Notice that the phrase “**God gave them up**” is used three times in this section of Romans 1: “*Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness...*” (v24). “*For this reason God gave them up to vile passions. For even their women exchanged the natural use for what is against nature*” (v26). “*God gave them over to a debased mind, to do those things which are not fitting...*” (v28).

These three repetitions will form the basis of our three doctrinal points. The idea in “*God gave them up...*” is not that God is to blame for man’s sin. No! The idea is that God doesn’t force someone to do what is right, and God doesn’t manipulate people. However, if people **willfully reject** the truth, and turn away from God, God allows those people to reap the sad consequences of their sin. There are consequences when God’s moral laws are broken.

Doctrinal Points

1. People who reject the truth of God are abandoned to the consequence of sexual fornication.

Verses 24- 25: “*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.*” What is “the lie” that is mentioned in verse 25? “The lie” is that the creature can exist independently of the Creator. The truth is that God has created us, and we find our fulfillment and enjoyment in obeying our Creator and following the guidelines that He has set up for us.

But many people today have bought into “the lie,” and think that they can do their own thing and find happiness and fulfillment and freedom without their Creator. Let me ask you, has America believed “the lie”? The answer is obvious! As result of rejecting the truth of God and believing “the lie,” there is unrestrained lust and sexual fornication in our country. How degrading and dishonoring and degenerate!

Unfortunately, this kind of behavior is even infiltrating from our culture into the church. Listen to the exhortation from Colossians 3:5-7, “*Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.* ⁶ *Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,* ⁷ *in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.*” We as Christians are to be the salt of the earth, **preventing** and **hindering** the spread of moral decay and corruption! Where is the moral leadership that we need in this land? People who reject the truth of God are abandoned to the consequence of sexual fornication.

2. People who reject the truth of God are abandoned to the consequence of sexual perversion.

Verses 26- 27: “*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.” How can anyone read this scripture and claim that homosexual practice is not a sin? Homosexual practice is not a legitimate "alternate lifestyle" -- it is sin! Now I don't doubt that some folks have more of a natural tendency towards homosexuality than others. Some people may even have been born with a tendency towards homosexuality -- but that doesn't make it any less sin. **All** of us are all born with natural tendencies to sin! Some of us are more vulnerable in certain areas, and others in other areas, but we're **all** born with the tendency to sin!

In Leviticus 18 and 20 the sin of homosexuality is called an abomination before God, and it was punishable by death under the Mosaic Law. The end of Romans 1:27 leaves no doubt that sexually-transmitted diseases are part of the bad fallout of sexual perversion.

The good news is that there is forgiveness for the sin of the sexual perversion -- just as there is forgiveness of any and every sin -- when a person turns to the Lord! Furthermore, there is victory over this sin. In 1 Corinthians 6:9-11 we read there that some of the Corinthians had been practicing homosexuals before they became Christians, but they had not only found forgiveness in Christ -- they had found victory in Christ! They were no longer practicing homosexuals. Notice that the **past tense** is used in 1 Corinthians 6:11 *“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.”*

Only in Christ can forgiveness and true freedom be found. You can't break God's moral laws and find happiness. People who reject the truth of God are abandoned to the consequence of sexual perversion.

3. People who reject the truth of God are abandoned to the consequence of a debased mind.

Verse 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...”* The idea in the term “debased mind” is a mind that is not approved by God, a mind that has rejected the truth of God, a mind that can't be approved by God. The idea that somehow sin only affects the body, but not the mind, is unbiblical. When God and His truth are rejected, the mind is debased. No matter how educated or trained that mind becomes, it is only a matter of time before the consequences that are listed in verse 29 work themselves out: *“being filled with all unrighteousness, sexual immorality, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, evil-mindedness; they are whisperers, ³⁰ backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents...”*

Notice that the terrible sins of **gossip** and **slander** are included along with violence and sexual immorality right here in God's list of terrible sins! Finishing the list: *“...whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, violent, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, ³¹ undiscerning, untrustworthy, unloving, unforgiving, unmerciful...”* Do any of those things ever characterize you? Why are all these sins so widespread -- and increasing -- in this country? The answer is our doctrinal point: people who reject the truth of God are abandoned to the consequence of a debased mind.

Practical Application

Does Romans 1:32 have an application for you?

What does Romans 1:32 say? *"...who, knowing the righteous judgment of God, that those who practice such things are deserving of death, not only do the same but also approve of those who practice them."*

Let me paraphrase Romans 1:32: Although the people in this last section of Romans 1 know that those who practice these sins are worthy of death according to the righteous judgment of God, they not only do these sins, but they also approve of those who practice them! Clearly Romans 1:32 is speaking of the unbeliever who has rejected God and His truth, and thus has a debased mind. They not only practice many of these sins, but they approve of others who practice these sins. Look at the latest approval polls in our country if you want to know the truth of this verse.

However, I think that there is an application here in this verse for Christians as well. But, you may say, where is the application here for **Christians**? Think about it. Do you watch movies or TV programs where some of these sins are not only permissible but even approved? Think of the sexual sin that is accepted in movies today. Think of the sinful practices that are joked about in TV sit-coms. Many Christians have become desensitized to this. When we tolerate certain movies and programs and the sins depicted in them, is this not passive approval of "those who practice these things"? Does Romans 1:32 have an application for you?