

EXPOSITION OF ROMANS

Message #8

Romans 1:24-32

This past week *Newsweek* magazine (April 13, 2009) featured as their main article “The Decline and Fall of Christian America.” In that article Jon Meacham said we are now living in the United States in a “post-Christian” western world. Meacham writes: “Many conservative Christians believe they have lost the battles over issues such as abortion, school prayer and even same-sex marriage, and that the country has now entered a post-Christian phase” (p. 36). What most Americans don’t realize is that we are not living in a post-Christian United States; we are living in a God-abandoned United States. The real significance of the spread of immorality and the rise in violence and crime is all an indication that we have been judicially abandoned by God.

These verses of Scripture are some of the most fearful verses in all of the New Testament, in fact, in the entire Bible. These verses speak of a moment when a nation or human being reaches a point in which he cannot stop himself from going to hell by believing on Christ because God makes a judicial decision while the person is on earth and says, “I am sending you to my wrath” and there is nothing you can do to stop it.

You will carefully notice that three times in this section we read words that should make us shudder – “**God gave them over**” (1:24, 26, 28). This section begins (v. 24) with the strongest inferential conjunction in Greek “therefore” (διό) which refers back to the preceding context and introduces the results of the preceding data. Because God has revealed His wrath against sin and because men have suppressed truth about God and rejected the truth of God’s Divine power and Deity and because they have refused to glorify God and have given themselves over to stupid speculations and idolatry, the result is “God gave them over or God gave them up.” As Dr. Harry Ironside said, “Because men gave God up He gave them up” (*Romans*, p. 31).

The verb “gave over” (παρέδωκεν) definitely speaks of a judicial abandonment. This particular verb was used of a person who had the authority to commit or deliver someone over to prison or judgment (G. Abbott-Smith, *Greek Lexicon*, p. 339). This is more than just a passive permission of letting the person just go his own way (which would require a passive verb). This is more than just a non preventative non restraint, this is an active, judicial act and decision of God in which He withdraws His restraint, His protection and His grace and pronounces a judgment against the nation or person which says, “I give you up, you are destined for My condemnatory wrath. I am pushing you into condemnation.” This is a retributive action and judicial judgment of God.

PAUL WARNS THAT A CONTINUAL REJECTION OF GOD WILL LEAD TO A JUDICIAL ABANDONMENT OF GOD.

Now the actual verb “gave over” or “gave up” (παρέδωκεν) is aorist, active, indicative. What this means is there is a point in time (aorist tense) when God takes charge of the action (active voice) and factually (indicative mood) decrees that this nation, organization or individual receives His condemnatory eternal death penalty.

Just exactly when this moment occurs is God's business, but in this text we may see evidences that the condemnatory action has occurred.

There is a false concept in theology which says a person may choose to believe on Christ any time he wants. That is absolutely not true. **First**, the Spirit of God is the One who brings a person to salvation at the time of God's choosing, not ours. **Second**, it is possible for one to reach a point when God has given a person up and he no longer can respond.

Years ago there was a dance called the "Limbo." Two people held a stick and all people tried to lean backward and go under it. The point of the contest was to see "how low can you go" until you fall. Well in this section, God shows you how low people can go and how much they deserve to fall into hell via His judicial abandonment.

AREA OF ABANDONMENT #1 – Abandonment because of sexual lusts. 1:24-25

The possibility of being judged for sexual immorality is a real possibility for even God's own people. For example, when we read a text like Leviticus 20:10-26, we soon realize that certain sensual and sexual sins meant even God's own people would be put to death. We know that Jesus Christ warned people in His own church that He would physically execute them if they persisted in immorality (Revelation 2:20-23). If God would do these kinds of things to His own people, think of the threat of abandonment against those who aren't His people.

When Paul wrote Romans in A.D. 57-58, the leadership of Rome epitomized a lust-crazed society. It was an age of "moral suicide." Fourteen of the first fifteen Roman Emperors were homosexuals, including Nero. The wife of Claudius, who reigned from A.D. 41-54, used to leave the palace at night and go down to work as a prostitute in a brothel. His wife, Agrippina, and his former wife, Messalina, were both highly immoral.

Rome was a free-wheeling, anything goes, open society and Paul wanted this kind of culture to realize that God is not just an "idle spectator." He will actually give a society up to its lust-crazed lifestyle; He will judicially abandon nations and individuals to His wrath.

Now you will notice that **verse 24** says God gave them up because of the lustful impurity that was in their hearts. **The result of a lust-filled, impure heart is that people do dishonorable things with their bodies**. When a person has a heart that is lust-crazed and impure, it is just a matter of time until he will do something sinful and dishonorable with his or her body.

We may also observe that **verse 25** begins with the conjunction "for" which gives us a reason. why God gave them up; because they exchanged the truth of God, which teaches that sex is only honorable in marriage, and they believe and live a lie and they end up worshipping and serving themselves rather than God who is blessed forever. Any immoral person cannot possibly worship God, because he worships himself and his immorality. **This kind of person or nation can be and will be abandoned by God.**

Just this past week, our President told a group of Arab nations that we were not a Christian nation but we were a moral nation. I am not sure where he is getting his delusional news reports, but we are anything but a moral nation.

According to statistics from Josh McDowell's statistical digest - every year over 3 million adolescents contract a sexually transmitted disease. Adult bookstores outnumber McDonald's in the United States by a margin of 3 to 1. One out of 10 children will be sexually molested in this country. A woman will be raped on a college campus in this country every 21 hours. A woman is raped in this country every 6 minutes.

Furthermore, we are a country that promotes and pays for abortions, we accept all forms of adultery, we promote any form of sexual perversion and then have the audacity to hypocritically say we are a "moral" country. We are anything but that.

We are a lust-crazed country. The United States is immoral and impure and evil and it is possible that we have now been abandoned by God.

Dr. Jennings Bryant has analyzed the effects of a lust-crazed person or nation and we have used some of his outline to present to you seven negative results of being lust crazed:

(Result #1) - You will lose your ability to make moral judgments - You lose sense of justice, righteousness, fairness. You justify things you should condemn.

(Result #2) - You will lose your ability to be trusted and to trust - Lust-crazed people are not reliable people. You cannot depend on them. They are sporadic, unpredictable and unstable.

(Result #3) - You will lose your ability to function in the right role in your family - One given to immoral things cannot properly relate to a mate or children. Ofttimes they sneak away from responsibilities to pursue their addiction. Ofttimes a man will let his wife do anything and also his children, because he is covering his secret life and does dare call right-right and wrong-wrong.

(Result #4) - You will lose your ability to maintain a commitment - Some of the most unstable people you will ever meet in any relationship are lust-crazed people. They are unstable, unsocial, irrational and emotional. They love their sin more than any one or any thing.

(Result #5) - You will lose your ability to love - Love for a lust-crazed maniac is twisted and distorted. True Biblical love is not possible for one given over to lusts.

(Result #6) - You lost your ability to be greatly used by God - God's Spirit cannot and will not use a dirty vessel.

(Result #7) - You will risk being abandoned by God - For the unbeliever this means God gives you up to go to hell. For a believer it means God condemns you to ignorance and you will lose God's protection, His blessings and ultimately His rewards.

(The Josh McDowell Research Almanac and Statistical Digest, pp. 233-235)

If you are presently plunged deep into lustful sin, flee it now before it is too late for you.

AREA OF ABANDONMENT #2 – Abandonment because of homosexuality . 1:26-27

Make absolutely no mistake about this; God’s view of homosexuality is that it is a degrading, abnormal passion and perversion that will bring the wrath of God and the abandonment of God to a nation, to a city and to an individual. It is the most despicable and abnormal act that one may do with his or her body.

Homosexuality is an unnatural and vile sin . It is normal for a man to be sexually drawn to a woman and for a woman to be sexually drawn to a man. It is abnormal and immoral and unnatural for a man to be sexually drawn to another man or a woman to another woman. It is evil and it is detestable (Leviticus 20:13) and those who are in this sin deserve death and abandonment and damnation.

Notice the end of **verse 27**, the “due penalty” for such sin is the abandonment of God. Homosexuals have a due penalty and they are going to receive it - they are abandoned to receive the condemnation of God.

When Paul wrote Romans, homosexuality was the prevalent sin among both the Greeks and the Romans. In fact, Dr. Cranfield in his commentary said that that culture considered this sexual perversion to be superior to a relationship between a man and woman (*Romans*, pp. 35-36).

Many read that and say, how sick. But don’t kid yourself because the United States is nearing the same low level. In fact, Erica Jong, who herself was no monkess, said, “It’s hard enough to find attractive single men without having to quiz them on their history of bisexuality and demand a blood test” (*Time*, February 16, 1987, p. 51). Many states now promote and are legalizing same-sex relationships and all of this says we are in the process of being abandoned by God.

By the way, contemporary homosexuals look at these verses and conclude that they are discussing the evil of one who is presently in a heterosexual relationship, such as a bisexual, but not one whose preference is homosexuality. But the Greek grammar does not permit such an interpretation.

Let me take a moment to point out a couple of grammatical facts from the Greek text. **First**, the words “women” and “men” are gender -oriented in Greek not relationship -oriented. The noun for “women” (v. 26) is one (θηλυς) which specifically has to do with any female and the noun “man” (αρσεν) is one that specifically has to do with any male (*Greek Lexicon*, pp. 207, 61). **Second**, the pronoun “another” (αλληλους) means another of the same kind (v. 27). So the written grammar teaches this - if any female is involved with another of her same sex or if any male is involved with another of his same sex - they are involved in something perverted and abominable in the sight of God and they will be abandoned by God.

In fact, the present tense participle “receiving” indicates that this sin will continually and habitually cause God to abandon a nation and person as a deserved penalty of their error. I am not sure how or when the term “faggot” ever became to be used as a euphemism for homosexual because the actual meaning of “faggot,” according to Webster, is a bundle of sticks destined to be burned. The original meaning of this term precisely fits the theology of this text because that is precisely what God is promising.

Let me cite four lessons from this text we learn about homosexuality:

1. Homosexuality goes against the natural inborn passion God has placed within every male and female. Homosexuals are made, not born. They choose this sin.
2. Homosexuality is a vile, degrading sin in the sight of God. Let us not call this an alternative lifestyle, let us call it what it is, an abominable sin.
3. When a homosexual flaunts his sin, he may, in fact, be demonstrating God has abandoned him or her.
4. The only hope for a homosexual is to come to the cross of Christ by faith in Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ can deliver one and set one free. Jesus Christ can and will save any who trust in Him and He will take them out of this evil and transform him for His glory.

AREA OF ABANDONMENT #3 – Abandonment because of mental depravity. **1:28-32**

God does not just abandon people to their lusts and to their homosexuality, but He also will abandon people to their mental depravity, which affects their choices, their spirituality and their words. Notice where it is that evil starts - it starts in the mind.

The word “depraved” (v. **28**) is one that means God abandons them to their useless mindset. God can and will abandon a person to always think the same way in their depraved, God-rejecting, useless way. The list here is a list of depraved things which start in the mind which indicate God has given up a person or a nation.

Here are twenty-one clear indicators a person or a society has been abandoned by God:

- 1) Filled with unrighteousness (**1:29a**) - Those who are continually doing all kinds of things not righteous or just.
- 2) Filled with wickedness (**1:29b**) - Those who are continually doing that which is sexually immoral.
- 3) Filled with greed (**1:29c**) - Those who are continually getting more through violent methods and means. Those who disregard rights of others.
- 4) Filled with evil (**1:29d**) - Those who continually do things that are evil and vicious.
- 5) Filled with envy (**1:29e**) - Those who continually resent what others have.
- 6) Filled with murder (**1:29f**) - Those who will kill someone or murder them for advantage or gain.
- 7) Filled with strife (**1:29g**) - Those who continually are in contention with someone for some personal gain.

- 8) Filled with deceit (1:29h) - Those who continually set deceptive traps and snares for people to try to manipulate things their own way.
- 9) Filled with malice (1:29i) - Those who continually have a deep spite and evil hatred for someone in an unbiblical way.
- 10) Filled with gossips (1:29j) - Those who continually speak and whisper behind a person's back, not to his face.
- 11) They are slanderers (1:30a) - One who verbally abuses someone and is open about it.
- 12) Those who are haters of God (1:30b) - A God-hater is one who hates God, His authority, His Word and anyone connected to Him. This is active animosity against the Person of God and the truth of God.
- 13) Those who are insolent (1:30c) - One who is violent. Aristotle said this person harms others for the sheer pleasure of harming others.
- 14) Those who are arrogant (1:30d) - One who is proud is one who shows himself above others in a haughty and negative way. There is a positive, right way to show oneself above others; this is not it.
- 15) Those who are boastful (1:30e) - One who verbally vaunts himself in an arrogant way that is not true but is an impostor.
- 16) Those who invent evil (1:30f) - One who finds or even invents new forms of evil.
- 17) Those who are disobedient to parents (1:30g) - One who refuses to obey or submit himself or herself to his or her parents. Will not honor or obey.
- 18) Those who are without understanding (1:31a) - One who has no moral sense.
- 19) Those who are untrustworthy 1:31b - One who is not true to engagements, one who breaks agreements. One gives his word to do something and then does something else.
- 20) Those who are unloving 1:31c - One who does not have the normal love for his own family members that he ought to have.
- 21) Those who are unmerciful 1:31d - Those who will never show pity on the helpless.

These qualities were in fact the terrible qualities of the Emperors of Rome when Paul wrote Romans. They were especially true of Nero who was the emperor at the time.

God makes three startling statements about these mentally and morally depraved people:

Statement #1 - The ones doing these kinds of things know the ordinance of God. **1:32a**

Don't be fooled - those involved in these things know they are doing wrong and they know they will face the judgment of God.

Statement #2 - The one doing these things give hearty approval to others doing the same thing. **1:32c**

There is a bizarre camaraderie among depraved people. In depravity, 'birds of a feather always flock together.'

Statement #3 - The one doing these things is worthy of death. **1:32b**

The death being described here is not physical, although that will certainly happen, but eternal. Those who persist in their depravity know they are heading to hell.

The conscience of a man and the condition of mankind leave men everywhere without excuse. You can be sure that when God says - I give you up, it is completely deserved and the nation, the city or the individual knows it.

(Practical Considerations)

1. One continually involved in these things risks abandonment by God.
2. Believers in Christ should move far from these evils - let them not once be named among us.
3. The purpose of this section is to show all are guilty and deserve God's wrath. Place your faith in Jesus Christ and you will be saved.