

Romans 1:24-32

The Results of the Wrath of God

How would you define hell?

- What terms would you use?
- What descriptions would you choose?
- What is the worst part about hell?

My perspective on hell has been fine-tuned over the years since I first became a believer

- I have come to a better understanding of what hell is really about

Hell is a place where the wrath of God will never cease

- Forever and ever, God's wrath and fury against sin will be continually on display

When Moses saw the burning bush, he marveled that it was never consumed (Ex 3:2)

- Hell will be the eternal display of God's wrath against sin which will never be consumed or exhausted

I used to think of hell exclusively in terms of its physical elements

- Unquenchable fire
- Unthinkable darkness
- Untolerable pain

I believe that the physical aspect of hell will be beyond any human description

- There is a literal hell for all those who reject the Gospel

Hell is the ultimate payment of the penalty for sin, "**For the wages of sin is death**" (Ro 6:23)

- It will be the future, final separation of holy God from unholy sinners

In a word, hell will be the place where unbelievers are abandoned by God

- 2 Thessalonians 1:8-9 contains the best definition of hell in the Bible, "**dealing out retribution to those who do not know God and to those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. And these will pay the penalty of eternal destruction, away from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power**"

What a frightening thought!

- One day, God will finally remove Himself from those who reject Him

For the time being, however, God extends grace, mercy, and patience toward sinful humanity

- He is ever so patient, even with those who continue to reject Him
- As the apostle Peter writes, "**The Lord is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.**" (2 Pe 3:9)

But God's wrath is not simply a future reality

- It is experienced in the here and now

Paul discusses how God is giving a partial manifestation of His wrath in today's society

- The reality of God's wrath (1:18)
- The reasons for God's wrath (1:19-23)

Why is God displaying His wrath?

- Man has rejected God's creation (1:19-20)
- Man has refused God's honor (1:21)
- Man has reinterpreted God's worship (1:22-23)

This morning's passage will remind us that sin must be punished

- In His holiness, God cannot allow sin to be committed without consequences

Let's read Romans 1:18-32

The apostle Paul lists three results or consequences of God's wrath toward sin

- These three results are framed around the repetition of a key verb
 - o God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts (1:24-25)
 - o God gave them over to the dishonor of their passions (1:26-27)
 - o God gave them over to the depravity of their mind (1:28-32)

I. God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts (1:24-25)

²⁴Therefore God gave them over

In Romans 1:18-23, the apostle Paul has stated the reasons why God's wrath is incited

- Unbelievers have rejected the witness of God in creation
- Unbelievers have refused to honor God or be thankful
- Unbelievers have resisted the worship of God, choosing instead to worship idols of their own imagination and creation

God responded and "gave them over"

- This verb is repeated three times in this closing section of Romans 1
 - o 1:24 – "God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity"
 - o 1:26 – "God gave them over to degrading passions"
 - o 1:28 – "God gave them over to a depraved mind"

What does this verb mean?

- To hand over
- To deliver

It is used in different ways throughout the NT

- Jesus was given over by Judas – betrayal (Mk 14:10)
- Pilate delivered Jesus to be crucified (Mk 15:15)
- Various individuals were delivered over to Satan (1 Cor 5:5; 1 Tim 1:20)
- Jesus Christ was delivered for our sins (Rom 8:32; Gal 2:20)

But the specific use here in Romans 1 is of God giving over unbelievers in judgment

- God is actively involved in the judgment of sinners¹

¹ Leon Morris, *The Epistle to the Romans*, 88.

Stephen tells about Israel's act of idolatry in demanding that an idol be formed while Moses was on the mountain with God

- Acts 7:42 records these sobering words, "But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven"

Another passage shows that part of God's judgment is removing His hand of restraint

- Paul speaks of unbelievers as "being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality, for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness." (Eph 4:18-19)

I want us to capture the implications of this verb²

- On the one hand, God indirectly withdraws His restraining and protective hand, allowing the consequences of sin to run their course in the lives of those who reject Him
- On the other hand, God directly judges unbelievers with specific acts of judgment (i.e., the Flood and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah)

The threefold use of the verb, "gave over" insinuates a successive departure on the part of God toward sinful individuals³

- Man fails to acknowledge God
- God continues to withdraw Himself

Man's deliberate attempt to turn away from God brings about tragic consequences

- Man has earned his own punishment for sin⁴
- It is part of the cause and effect cycle of sin

in the lusts of their hearts to impurity,

The first use of this main verb tells us that God gives unbelievers over "in the lusts of their hearts"

- This is much worse than "the lusts of the flesh"

"the lusts of their hearts" implies a deep-seated yielding to sin

- Lusts have taken grip of a person's heart

The very first stage described here portrays God as removing His restraint in the area of sin⁵

- He allows lusts to take root in a person's heart

Without true repentance, the unbeliever will continue to progress deeper and deeper into sin

- This will lead to further "impurity"

Paul wrote this letter from the city of Corinth, a city known for its sexual immorality

- A certain temple at Corinth was home to more than a thousand religious prostitutes⁶
- He saw firsthand the awful impurity of unbelievers

² John MacArthur, Jr., *The MacArthur NT Commentary, Romans 1-8*, 100-01.

³ Donald Grey Barnhouse, *Man's Ruin*, 271.

⁴ Everett F. Harrison, *The Expositor's Bible Commentary, Romans*, 24.

⁵ William R. Newell, *Romans Verse-by-Verse*, 32.

⁶ William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary, Romans*, 75.

Did you notice how Paul associated immorality with idolatry?⁷

- Every immoral individual is a person who has bowed the knee to worship something other than the true and living God

Immorality is but one consequence of idolatry

- Sin carries its own penalty!

that their bodies might be dishonored among them.

Idolatry leads to immorality

- Immorality has drastic effects on the human body
- Sin dishonors the human body

²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie,

Mankind's desire to substitute something in the place of God is again highlighted here

- Unbelievers “**exchanged the truth of God for a lie**”

This is the heart of idolatry

- Rejecting the true God for something false

God is the God of truth (cf. John 14:6)

- Satan is the father of lies (John 8:44)

and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator,

Every unbeliever who exchanges the truth of God for a lie worships and serves his idol

- The thought here is that God the Creator is dismissed while some creation is worshipped!

To the fullest degree, unbelievers are worshipping their idols

- What a graphic picture!

who is blessed forever. Amen.

The apostle Paul then chimes in with a joyful doxology toward the true God, speaking of Him as He “**who is blessed forever. Amen.**”

Unbelievers have refused to honor God and give Him thanks

- But Paul willingly praises God and glorifies Him⁸

Paul worships the true God

- He is not guilty of idolatry

We know from what God has saved Paul

- He was actively persecuting the Church when God saved him

⁷ W.H. Griffith-Thomas, *St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans*, 73.

⁸ Morris, 91.

Unbelievers have no saving knowledge of Jesus Christ

- Hence, they were worshipping and serving some creation instead of the Creator

This is further evidence that God was giving these unbelievers over in the lusts of their hearts

- God was allowing their lusts to become ingrained into their very character and nature
- God was removing His hand of restraint from their lives

But there is a second stage to God handing unbelievers over

II. God gave them over to the dishonor of their passions (1:26-27)

²⁶For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions;

For the second time, this phrase is repeated, “**God gave them over**”

- God is removing His hand of restraint still more

First, it was God giving unbelievers over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity

- Now it is God giving them over to degrading passions

We all have desires

- Some are good and noble
- Others are impure and sinful

Part of the reality of God giving unbelievers over is that they will have “**degrading passions**”

- They will desire things that are degrading, shameful, and humiliating

All of this is because unbelievers have rejected God and His saving Gospel

- In turn, God has given them over to their desires

The primary degrading passion that is described here in verses 26-27 is homosexuality

- Women with women
- Men with men

God created sexuality

- He created the first two humans as male and female
- Inherent within that was their sexual distinctness

Everything was fine until the Fall of man

- Immediately, Adam and Eve saw their naked condition and were ashamed (cf. Gen 3:10)

The problem is not that we are sexual beings

- The problem is that we distort the God-given plan for sexuality

God designed marriage to several purposes

- To glorify God
- To provide companionship
- To bring children into the world
- To illustrate God’s relationship with the Church
- To complement and complete one another

God's plan has always been for sexual fulfillment to be carried out in the marriage relationship

- Not before marriage
- Not outside of marriage

But unbelieving mankind has rejected God

- Therefore, they are left to their own degrading passions and lusts
- That is what we see in verses 27-28

for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural.

Paul speaks of the sin of homosexuality

- He mentions women sinning with women first of all

The apostle notes that “**women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural**”

- Once again, we have a use of this verb, “**exchanged**”

This was used back in verse 25, “**they exchanged the truth of God for a lie**”

- They rejected the truth and chose a lie

Here in verse 26, unbelievers reject God's design

- In its place, they substitute their own degrading passions

Much of the time when homosexuality is spoken of, it is males with males

- But Paul is quick to remind us that women are just as culpable

As a matter of fact, the very mention of lesbianism here indicates that sin can affect anyone at any times

- It is not just a male sin
- It is a human sin

Paul describes homosexuality as “**that which is unnatural**”

- Common sense tells you that females should not be with females and males should not be with males

But this is part of God's punishment on the unbelievers

- Their thinking is warped
- They don't care for God's design

²⁷ and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman

Verse 27 gives the flipside of verse 26

- He has already discussed women with women
- Now he speaks of men with men

For the second time, Paul speaks of homosexuality as being against God's Divine design

- Unbelievers “**abandoned the natural function of the woman**”

Unbelievers have chosen to seek sexual fulfillment outside of God's design

- They are trying to find fulfillment and satisfaction in ways that God never designed

What unbelievers don't realize is that sin never satisfies

- There is no lasting fulfillment after sin
- Sin always creates an intense longing for more

and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts

Part of the lack of fulfillment created by sin is the fact that unbelievers “**burned in their desire toward one another**”

- They are pictured as savage beasts, going after the next high
- But they fail to realize that they will never be satisfied

We think of the men of Sodom who were consumed with their desire to have illicit sex with the angels in Lot's home

- Even after they were blinded, they still tried to find the door!

The Bible portrays the sin of homosexuality as “**committing indecent acts**”

- It is indecent because it is a deviation from God's design

Throughout Scripture, homosexuality is labeled as a sin

- The OT demanded the death penalty for those guilty (Lev 20:13)

No one is born a homosexual

- Just like no one is born a thief

Unbelievers learn to adopt certain sinful attitudes throughout their lifetimes

- God gives various individuals over to various sins, such as those that will be described later in Romans 1

Neither is homosexuality “an alternate lifestyle”

- It is a sin against God
- The remedy is repentance

and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.

Homosexuality is not a neutral sin

- It carries a penalty

Of course, we know that the wages of sin is death (cf. Rom 6:23a)

- Sin brings about a separation from holy God

But another aspect of sin's penalty is the sin itself

- There is a relationship between sin and its consequences

The sin of homosexuality carries its own consequences, such as venereal diseases

The Roman culture in the time of Paul was very open to homosexuality

- As a matter of fact, some Romans thought that homosexuality was superior to heterosexuality⁹

⁹ Robert H. Mounce, *NAC, Romans*, 82.

Unbelievers are portrayed as being actively involved in their sins

- They are not innocent victims who are taken captive against their wills¹⁰

Let me say a final word about homosexuality

- It is a vile and heinous sin
- But it is forgivable

Those who practice homosexuality need the Gospel

- We must be willing to be used of God in taking the saving message of Jesus Christ to those caught in this sin

Listen to the words of the apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 6, "**Or do you not know that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God. 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 Christ, and in the Spirit of our God.**" (1 Co 6:9-11, emphasis mine)

- There is hope for those caught in the sin of homosexuality!
- God can change their lives!

Paul has mentioned two aspects of God giving individuals over

- God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts (1:24-25)
- God gave them over to the dishonor of their passions (1:26-27)

There is a third and final element listed in verses 28-32

III. God gave them over to the depravity of their mind (1:28-32)

²⁸ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind,

This is the third and final time that the verb “**gave over**” is used

- The final verdict of sinners rejecting God is that He will cause their minds to become “**depraved**”

There is a bit of wordplay that goes on here that is not seen in the English translations

- The words “**acknowledge**” and “**depraved**” actually come from the same Greek root word

The Greek root word was used of testing metals

- To determine their value and genuineness

The idea is that unbelievers have tested God

- But they have concluded that He is not necessary in their lives
- He has failed their test

But in the providence of God, unbelievers won't have the last word

- God will have the final word

Unbelievers have continually tried to suppress the truth of God in unrighteousness (1:18)

- God finally gives these individuals what they want!

¹⁰ Harrison, 26.

to do those things which are not proper.

Having a mind that is warped and obsessed with sin, unbelievers “do those things which are not proper”

When an unbeliever has reached this stage of rejecting God, the sky is the limit

- Any sin is possible

What follows in verses 29-31 is a laundry list of twenty-one (21) sins

- These are what will characterize the unbeliever who continually rejects the witness of creation and conscience

The King James and New King James translations have 23 sins¹¹

- Their #2 and #22 are not included in the oldest manuscripts, however
- Therefore, we receive the 21 sins listed in the other translations as reflecting what God wanted to communicate

These 21 sins are broken down into three major groups

- There is a group of four which is governed by the verb “being filled”
- There is a group of five which is governed by the adjective “full of”
- There is a final group of twelve which are given in consecutive order

This is not designed to be comprehensive list of every sin committed by unbelievers

- There are obviously sins that are omitted that could be added

But the twenty-one sins that are listed should be ample evidence of the potential slavery that sin brings

²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil;

The apostle portrays the unbeliever as “being filled” with a number of sins

- Their lives are characterized by these sins

Unrighteousness	This opening term serves as a comprehensive term, indicating all that is against the righteous nature of our God
Wickedness	The depravity, iniquity, and evil that sin produces - These people enjoy what is wrong instead of what is right This is the same word that is used of Satan, as he is called “the wicked one” (Eph 6:16)
Greed	At the heart of this sin is the insatiable desire for more - There is always a grasping, itching for more There is no sense of fulfillment for this individual - Nothing can satisfy Listen to what Paul wrote in Colossians 3:5, “Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry” - Greed is idolatry

¹¹ Barnhouse, 284.

Evil	This is ill will and deliberate desire to injure someone else - It is the brashness that is not held in check by external laws
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full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice;

The adjective “full of” describes something that is filled to capacity

- After Jesus’ resurrection, Peter’s net was “full of large fish” (John 21:11)
- James describes the tongue as being “full of deadly poison” (James 3:8)

Unbelievers are further described as being filled with five other sins that dominate and control their thinking and actions

Envy	This is the attitude of wanting something that another person has - This person will go to any length in order to obtain what he wants
Murder	Unbelievers will even kill others out of various motives - Jealousy - Hatred - Etc. Envy oftentimes leads to murder - Consider Cain who killed Abel - Consider Joseph’s brothers and their actions against Joseph
Strife	There are some who seem to want to pick a fight and cause trouble anywhere they go
Deceit	The thought behind this word is that of a bait - To lure someone into a trap These individuals are cunning and deceptive - They try to take advantage of others
Malice	A general attitude of spite, even to the point of harming others

they are gossips,³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

Gossips	These are individuals who don’t have the courage to tell you truth to your face - They go behind your back and spread gossip by whispering in the ears of others - They are back-stabbers ¹² The Word of God speaks against those who spread gossip - The tongue needs to be controlled!
Slanderers	This differs from gossips in a very distinct manner - Gossips commit secret slander - Slanderers commit open slander

¹² Mounce, 85.

	<p>These people won't just stab you in the back</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They will stab you in your chest!
Haters of God	Unbelievers hate God!
Insolent	This is the attitude of taking pleasure in insulting others ¹³
Arrogant	<p>Unbelievers are full of arrogance and pride</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They think themselves to be wise, but in reality are fools (Rom 1:22) <p>This sin created a false attitude of self-sufficiency</p>
Boastful	Those who constantly brag about their own accomplishments and achievements
Inventors of evil	<p>This sin details the progression of sin</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - After a while, certain sins lose their appeal <p>What happens next?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unbelievers invent new ways to sin!
Disobedient to parents	<p>Is it any wonder that Paul put this sin in the list?</p> <p>Left unchecked, sin will cause a child to dishonor and disrespect his parents</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - We are seeing this more and more in our culture <p>I saw this in Britain</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - It is far worse than what I see in America <p>Children, if you can't learn to obey and honor your parents, you don't obey and honor God</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Your problem isn't your parents - Your problem is your heart attitude toward authority <p>Realize that God has placed your parents in a position of authority over you</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - You will <u>always</u> be in a position of submission, whether to your parents, an employee, and ultimately to God Himself
Without understanding	<p>This person has no spiritual or moral understanding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He doesn't understand spiritual truth (cf. 1 Cor 2:14)
Untrustworthy	<p>This person can't be trusted</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - He/she breaks contracts and commitments without thinking anything is wrong <p>My Dad taught me the meaning of the saying, "Your word is your bond."</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Say what you mean - Mean what you say
Unloving	<p>This person doesn't have love or affection toward others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Only love for self
Unmerciful	<p>This sin is the attitude of refusing to show compassion and pity toward others</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They want to show cruelty toward others

¹³ Newell, 37.

	This is the opposite attitude that God shows toward sinners!
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³²and, although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death,

Once again, Paul speaks about the fact that unbelievers know about God through creation

- However, they have rejected God and created their own idols

Furthermore, they know that “**those who practice such things are worthy of death**”

- Unbelievers are aware that their sins cannot go unpunished

Notice that Paul speaks of those who “**practice**” such sins

- It is not the occasional nature
- It is those whose very lives are characterized by these sins

God will eventually give unbelievers over to their sinfulness

- Sin will master them
- Sin will take over their lives

The apostle speaks of those who are presently under the bondage of such sins

- He uses the present tense to indicate the ongoing, persistent nature of sin in a person’s life

they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

It is bad enough for unbelievers to commit these sins as a habit and lifestyle

- But Paul mentions something else

There are those who “**give hearty approval to those who practice them**”

- They applaud and congratulate the sins of others

How do we know when an individual or society has reached the bottom of the moral ladder?

- First, when blatant sin is committed and tolerated
- Second, when that blatant sin is applauded, celebrated, and honored

America is quickly approaching this level of flippancy regarding sin

- Homosexuality is being applauded and celebrated

But let’s not single out homosexuality as if it was the worst sin

- All sin is an abomination to God

Paul wants to show that sinful mankind is so wicked that he can’t save himself¹⁴

- He desperately needs the work of God’s grace in his heart

Is every sinner filled with these 21 sins?

- Is every unbeliever that you know totally controlled by these sins?
- Certainly not

¹⁴ Hendriksen, 82.

We all know of unbelievers who are charitable, polite, and helpful

- They certainly don't manifest the full reality of the sins described in these verses

But Paul would have us to realize that inherent within every unbeliever is the potential for vileness and wickedness

- Every unbeliever has the capability of committing any or all of these sins

The doctrine of total depravity teaches that there is no saving merit in humans

- There is nothing good that can satisfy God

Any and all the help that man receives is a direct result of God's grace and mercy

Yet our society continues to believe and teach that mankind is naturally good at heart

- The world around us would have us to minimize God's holiness and maximize man's inherent goodness

The problem is that no human is good

- Scripture tells us that "**there is none righteous, not even one**" (Rom 3:10)

This is why everyone needs Jesus Christ

- There is no one who can claim to be spiritually good enough not to need the salvation from Jesus Christ

It matters not what sin you are enslaved to

- Jesus can forgive all your sin and cleanse you

If you are a believer here this morning, realize that any one of these sins can still affect you

- Just because you are a Christian doesn't insulate you from these sins

Praise God for His grace in your life

- Were it not for His grace, any one of us could very well be dominated and controlled by these sins

For those of you who have yet to trust in Jesus Christ, I put forth the warning found here in Romans 1

- Sin will always take you downward, not upward
- Sin will always enslave you; it never delivers freedom
- Sin will always frustrate you, never giving you true fulfillment
- Sin will be punished, never excused

Unbelieving friend, you are on a slippery slope of sin

- God will progressively give you over to sin, allowing it to control your body and mind

Paul has painted a portrait of God withdrawing His restraint from unbelievers

- He gives unbelievers over to the lusts of their hearts
- He gives unbelievers over to the dishonor of their passions
- He gives unbelievers over to the depravity of their mind

You have chosen to abandon and reject God, thereby making yourself the god of your life

- God will continue to abandon you, leaving you to the consequences of sin¹⁵

¹⁵ Alan F. Johnson, *Everyman's Bible Commentary, Romans*, 45.

Hell will be the ultimate fulfillment of God removing His restraint

- Common grace, as you know it, will cease to exist
- Instead of enjoying God's favor, you will face His wrath forever

Sinner friend, you can't even imagine the horror of hell

- To be removed from every bit of common grace
- To be engulfed in God's wrath
- To be separated from God forever

It doesn't need to be this way, however

- Turn to Jesus
- Trust in His work on the cross to forgive you