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Series: The Book of Romans

Sin and Condemnation: The World's need to get right with God

(44)

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[Romans 1:18-3:20](#)

(Continuation from 09/04/16)

B. God's Case Against All Ungodliness and Unrighteousness of Men: How God Shows Wrath, [Romans 1:24-32](#)

2. ([Romans 1:24-25](#)) Sin— Body— Judgment: God—the only living and true God—shows wrath by giving men up to uncleanness.

[Romans 1:24-25 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁴“Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

The word “**impurity**” (*akatharsian*) means “**filthiness, immorality, defilement, dirt, pollution, contamination, infection**”. When men turn from God—abandon God to live unclean and immoral lives—God leaves men. **He abandons them to their choice**. God lets men wallow around in their filthiness. Men are judged and condemned to uncleanness.

1. The *reason* men are condemned to “**impurity**” is because of the *lusts* “**in their hearts**.” Their hearts are filled with “**lusts**” (*epithumiais*), that is, “**passionate cravings, desires, and urges**.” They long after things that displease God and that dishonor their bodies. God cares deeply about the human body, and he judges any person who abuses the body.

In the Greek the **lusts** are said to be “**in [en] their own hearts**.” Sin takes place in the heart *before* it takes place by act.

[Mark 7:20-23 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁰“And He was saying, “That which proceeds out of the man, that is what defiles the man.

²¹ For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,

²² deeds of coveting *and* wickedness, *as well as* deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride *and* foolishness.

²³ All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man.”

Romans 1:25 (NASB)

²⁵ For they **exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.**

2. The result of living an unclean life is idolatry. Men “**exchanged the truth of God into a lie and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator.**” When men live in uncleanness, they begin to serve and **to give their lives to one of two things.**

- a. They serve themselves, giving their time and energy to their own desires, pursuits, and lusts.
- b. They serve other “**gods,**” gods that allow them to go ahead and live as they wish. They *imagine* what god is like and they worship him either in their mind or in some graven image molded by their hands.

They conceive of a god that is.....

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. a god of Christianity | 4. a god of men |
| 2. a god of some religion | 5. a god of creation |
| 3. a god of some part of nature | 6. a god of goodness |

The point is this. Man abandons the only true and living God and lusts after uncleanness.

He lusts and craves so much.....

- 1. that he creates a god in his own mind who allows him to satisfy his lust.
- 2. that he rationalizes and thinks that his god understands his situation and need, and that his god will not judge him for his uncleanness and immorality.
- 3. that he conceives of a god that will allow him to do what he wants.
- 4. that he matches his god to fit his morals, letting his morals determine the kind of god he is going to worship.
- 5. that he twists god to fit what he wants.
- 6. that he allows his morals (uncleanness) to control his thoughts about God.

Man serves and gives his time and energy to the god he imagines in his mind and to the idols he creates within his imagination and thoughts. He abandons God so that he can live the unclean life he craves. Therefore, God judges man and abandons man to live in his uncleanness.

2 Peter 2:15 (NASB)

¹⁵ “[**The carnal**] ...forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness”

1 John 2:15-17 (NASB)

¹⁵ “**Do not love the world nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.**”

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¹⁶ For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world.

¹⁷ The world is passing away, and *also* its lusts; but the one who does the will of God lives forever.”

[Jeremiah 1:16 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁶ “**I will pronounce My judgments on them** concerning all their wickedness, whereby they have forsaken Me and have offered sacrifices to other gods, and worshiped the works of their own hands.”

[Jeremiah 2:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³ “For My people have committed two evils: They have forsaken Me, The fountain of living waters, To hew for themselves cisterns, Broken cisterns That can hold no water.”

[Jeremiah 15:6 \(NASB\)](#)

⁶ “You who have forsaken Me,” declares the LORD, “You keep going backward. So **I will stretch out My hand against you** and destroy you; I am tired of relenting!”

[2 Chronicles 30:7 \(NASB\)](#)

⁷ “Do not be like your fathers and your brothers, who were unfaithful to the LORD God of their fathers, **so that He made them a horror**, as you see.”

The Essence of Man’s Sinfulness

[Romans 1:24-25 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁴ “**Therefore, God gave them over** in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

Therefore, refers back to the reasons Paul has just set forth in [verses 18-23](#). Although God revealed himself to man ([vv. 19-20](#)), man rejected God ([v. 21](#)) and then rationalized his rejection ([v. 22](#); cf. [v. 18b](#)) and created substitute gods of his own making ([v. 23](#)). And because man abandoned God, God abandoned men—He **gave them over**. It is that divine abandonment and its consequences that Paul develops in [verses 24-32](#), the most sobering and fearful passage in the entire epistle.

Paradidōmi (gave... over) is an intense verb. In the New Testament it is used of giving one’s body to be burned ([1 Corinthians 13:3](#)) and three times of Christ’s giving Himself up to death ([Galatians 2:20](#); [Ephesians 5:2, 25](#)).

[1 Corinthians 13:3 \(NASB\)](#)

³ “And if I give all my possessions to feed *the poor*, and if I **surrender** [*Paradidōmi*] my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing.”

Galatians 2:20 (NASB)

²⁰“I have been crucified with Christ; and 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** [*Paradidōmi*] Himself up for me.”

Ephesians 5:2 (NASB)

²“And walk in love, just as Christ also loved you and **gave** [*Paradidōmi*] Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.”

Ephesians 5:25 (NASB)

²⁵“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and **gave** [*Paradidōmi*] Himself up for her.”

It is used in a judicial sense of men’s being committed to prison ([Mark 1:14](#); [Acts 8:3](#)).

Mark 1:14 (NASB)

¹⁴“Now after John had been **taken** [*Paradidōmi*] into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God.”

Acts 8:3 (NASB)

³“But Saul *began* ravaging the church, entering house after house, and dragging off men and women, he would **put** [*Paradidōmi*] them in prison.”

It is used in judgment ([Matthew 5:25](#); [Matthew 10:17](#), [19](#), [21](#); [Matthew 18:34](#))

Matthew 5:25 (NASB)

²⁵“Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not **hand you over** [*Paradidōmi*] to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.”

Matthew 10:17 (NASB)

¹⁷“But beware of men, for they will **hand you over** [*Paradidōmi*] to the courts and scourge you in their synagogues.”

Matthew 10:19 (NASB)

¹⁹“But when they **hand you over** [*Paradidōmi*], do not worry about how or what you are to say; for it will be given you in that hour what you are to say.”

Matthew 10:21 (NASB)

²¹“Brother will **betray** [*Paradidōmi*] brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death.”

Matthew 18:34 (NASB)

³⁴“And his lord, moved with anger, **handed him over** [*Paradidōmi*] to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.”

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And it is used of rebellious angels being delivered to pits of darkness ([2 Peter 2:4](#)).

[2 Peter 2:4 \(NASB\)](#)

⁴“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and **committed** [*Paradidōmi*] them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment.”

It is also used of Christ’s committing Himself to His Father’s care ([1 Peter 2:23](#)) and of the Father’s delivering His Own Son to propitiatory death ([Romans 4:25](#); [Romans 8:32](#)).

[1 Peter 2:23 \(NASB\)](#)

²³“And while being reviled, He did not revile in return; while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept **entrusting** [*Paradidōmi*] Himself to Him who judges righteously.”

[Romans 4:25 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁵“He who was **delivered over** [*Paradidōmi*] because of our transgressions, and was raised because of our justification.”

[Romans 8:32 \(NASB\)](#)

³²“He who did not spare His Own Son, but **delivered Him over** [*Paradidōmi*] for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?”

God’s giving over sinful mankind has a dual sense. **First**, in an *indirect* sense God **gave them over** simply by withdrawing His restraining and protective hand, allowing the consequences of sin to take their inevitable, destructive course. Sin degrades man, debases the image of God in which he is made, and strips him of dignity, peace of mind, and a clear conscience. Sin destroys personal relationships, marriages, families, cities, and nations. It also destroys churches.

Thomas Watson said, “Sin... puts gravel in our bread [and] wormwood in our cup” (*A Body of Divinity* [Carlisle, Pa.: Banner of Truth, 1983 reprint], p.136).

Fallen men are not concerned about their sin but only about the pain from the unpleasant consequences sin brings. Someone has well said that sin would have fewer takers if the consequences were immediate. Many people, for example, are greatly concerned about venereal disease but resent the suggestion of avoiding it by restraining sexual promiscuity and perversions.

Instead of adhering to God’s standards of moral purity, they attempt to remove the consequences of their impurity. They turn to counseling, to medicine, to psychoanalysis, to drugs, to alcohol, to travel, and to a host of other means to escape what cannot be escaped except by the removal of their sin.

It is said that an ermine (a short tailed weasel) would rather die than defile its beautiful coat of fur; the animal will go to incredible lengths to protect it. Man does not have such an inclination concerning the defilement of sin. He cannot keep himself pure and has no natural desire to do so.

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Not all of God's wrath is future. In the case of sexual promiscuity—perhaps more specifically and severely than in any other area of morality—God has continually poured out His divine wrath by means of venereal disease.

In regard to countless other manifestations of godlessness, He pours out His wrath in the forms of the loneliness, frustration, meaninglessness, anxiety, and despair that are so characteristic of modern society. As sophisticated, self-sufficient mankind draws further and further away from God, God gives them over to the consequences of their spiritual and moral rebellion against Him.

Commentator Alan F Johnson said, “Without God there are no abiding truths, lasting principles, or norms, and man is cast upon a sea of speculation and skepticism and attempted self-salvation” (*The Freedom Letter* [Chicago: Moody, 1974], p. 41).

The divine abandonment of men to their sin about which Paul speaks here is not eternal abandonment. As long as sinful men are alive, God provides opportunity for their salvation. That is the marvelous good news of God's grace, which Paul develops later in the epistle.

Like her Old Testament namesake, the Jezebel who was misleading the church at Thyatira was the embodiment of idolatrous, immoral godlessness, yet the Lord graciously gave her opportunity to repent (see [Revelation 2:20-21](#)).

[Revelation 2:20-21 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁰ **“But I have *this* against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray so that they commit *acts of immorality* and eat things sacrificed to idols.**

²¹ **I gave her time to repent, and she does not want to repent of her immorality.”**

Despite His righteous wrath against sin, God is patient toward sinners, “**not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance**” ([2 Peter 3:9](#)).

After giving a list of sins similar to that in [Romans 1:29-31](#), Paul reminded the Corinthian believers, “**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 Corinthians 6:11 NASB](#)). It is sin that makes the gospel of salvation necessary and that makes God's offer of salvation through Christ so gracious.

In a **second**, *direct* sense God **gave... over** rebellious mankind by specific acts of judgment. The Bible is replete with accounts of divine wrath being directly and supernaturally poured out on sinful men. The flood of Noah's day and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, for example, were not indirect natural consequences of sin but were overt supernatural expressions of God's judgment on gross and unrepented sin.

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God often allows men to go deeper and deeper into sin in order to drive them to despair and to show them their need of Him. Often He punishes men in order to heal and restore ([Isaiah 19:22](#)).

[Isaiah 19:22 \(NASB\)](#)

²²“The LORD will strike Egypt, striking but healing; so they will return to the LORD, and He will respond to them and will heal them.”

[Romans 1:24-25 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁴“Therefore, God gave them over in **the lusts of their hearts** to **impurity**, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

It was because **the lusts of their hearts** were for **impurity** that God abandoned men to their sin. Men’s lostness is not determined by the outward circumstances of their lives but by the inner condition of their **hearts**. A person’s sin begins within himself. “¹⁹For out of the heart,” Jesus said, “come evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, slanders. ²⁰These are the things which defile the man” ([Matthew 15:19-20](#)).

Jeremiah had proclaimed the same basic truth: “The heart is more deceitful than all else And is desperately sick; Who can understand it?” ([Jeremiah 17:9 NASB](#); cf. [Proverbs 4:23](#)).

[Proverbs 4:23 \(NASB\)](#)

²³“Watch over your heart with all diligence, For from it *flow* the springs of life.”

Used metaphorically in Scripture, “the heart” does not represent the emotions or feelings, as it generally does in modern usage, but rather the whole thinking process, including especially the will and man’s motivation. In its broadest sense, the heart represents the basic nature of a person, his inner being and character.

In our day, the basic ungodliness of man is nowhere more clearly exposed than in the popular admonition to do one’s own thing. Man’s “own thing” is sin, which characterizes his whole natural being. Self-will is the essence of all sin. Although Satan was responsible for their being tempted to sin, it was the voluntary placing of their own wills above God’s that caused Adam and Eve to commit the first sin.

[Romans 1:24 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁴“Therefore, God gave them over in the **lusts** of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

Men reject God because their preferences, their **lusts**, are for their own way rather than God’s. **Lusts** translates *epithumia*, which can refer to any desire but was most often used of carnal desire for that which was sinful or forbidden.

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Speaking about believers as well as unbelievers, James declared that “**each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust**” ([James 1:14 NASB](#)). Because even Christians are tempted to desire their own sin above God’s holiness, Paul warned the Thessalonians about falling into the lustful passions that characterized pagan Gentiles ([1 Thessalonians 4:5](#)).

[1 Thessalonians 4:3-5 \(NASB\)](#)

³“For this is the will of God, your sanctification; *that is*, that you abstain from sexual immorality;

⁴that each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,

⁵**not in lustful passion, like the Gentiles who do not know God.”**

He reminded the Ephesians that “...we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest” ([Ephesians 2:3 NASB](#)).

[Romans 1:24 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁴“Therefore, God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to **impurity**, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

Akatharsia (impurity) was a general term for uncleanness and was often used of decaying matter, especially the contents of a grave, which were considered by Jews to be both physically and ceremonially unclean. As a moral term, it usually referred to or was closely associated with sexual immorality.

Paul lamented over the Corinthians “...who [had] sinned in the past and not repented of the impurity, immorality and sensuality which they [had] practiced” ([2 Corinthians 12:21 NASB](#)).

He used the same three terms to introduce the list of “**deeds of the flesh**” that are in perpetual conflict with “**the fruit of the Spirit**” ([Gal. 5:19-23](#)). He exhorted the Ephesians: “Do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named among you, as is proper among saints” ([Ephesians 5:3](#); cf. [1 Thessalonians 4:7](#)).

[Romans 1:24 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁴“Therefore, God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to **impurity**, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them.

The effect of men’s rebellious, self-willed **impurity** was **that their bodies would be dishonored**. When men seek to glorify their own ways and to satisfy their bodies through shameful indulgence in sexual and other sins, their **bodies**, along with their souls, are instead **dishonored**. When man seeks to elevate himself for his own purposes and by his own standards, he inevitably does the opposite. The way of fallen mankind is always downward, never upward. The more he exalts himself, the more he declines. The more he magnifies himself the more he diminishes. The more he honors himself, the more he becomes **dishonored**.

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No society in history has given more attention to caring for the body than has the modern Western world. Yet no society has caused more degradation of the body. The more human life is exalted for its own sake, the more it is debased. In tragic irony, the same society that glorifies the body has no regard for the body, the same society that exalts man incessantly degrades him. The world echoes with demands for men's rights; yet books, movies, and television often portray brutality and murder as all but normal, and sexual promiscuity and perversion are constantly glamorized.

Because humanism rejects God, it has no basis for man's dignity. And therefore in the name of humanism, humanity is dehumanized. While lamenting man's inhumanity to man, fallen men refuse to recognize that in rejecting God they reject the only source and measure of man's dignity. Therefore, while loudly proclaiming the greatness of man, modern society abuses man at every turn. We sexually abuse one another, economically abuse one another, criminally abuse one another; and verbally abuse one another. Because they reject the God who made them and would redeem them, **"...the hearts of the sons of men are full of evil, and insanity is in their hearts throughout their lives..."** ([Ecclesiastes 9:3 NASB](#)).

The well-known founder of a contemporary pornographic empire is said to have commented: "Sex is a biological function like eating and drinking. So let's forget all the prudery about it and do whatever we feel like doing."

That such thinking is not the modern invention of a sophisticated "world come of age" is clearly seen in the fact that Paul confronted precisely the same thinking in Corinth nearly 2,000 years ago. A common saying in that day was **"Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food,"** and the apostle intimates that it was used even by some Christians to justify sexual immorality, comparing eating to sexual indulgence. Both were claimed to be merely biological functions, which could be used however one might choose. Paul's stinging reply to that perverted reasoning was, **"...The body is not for immorality but for the Lord; and the Lord is for the body"** ([1 Corinthians 6:13](#)).

[1 Corinthians 6:13 \(NASB\)](#)

¹³**"Food is for the stomach and the stomach is for food, but God will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for the Lord, and the Lord is for the body."**

As the apostle goes on to explain in that passage, sexual immorality not only is sin against the Lord but is sin against one's own body ([v 18](#)). That is his point of the present passage. The body that indulges in sexual impurity is itself **dishonored**; it is debased, disgraced, and degraded.

Newspapers abound with reports of senseless beatings for no other purpose than the perverted fun of it. Brutal wife and child abuse have become epidemic. *The Indianapolis Star* reported that child molesters have their own national organization called **NAMBLA (National American Man Boy Love Association)** that publishes a newsletter for members (Tom Keating, "Molesters Have Own Organization" [15 April 1981], p.17).

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One of the shocking things the article mentioned was that at a large seminar to discuss prevention of child pornography and related crimes, a man interrupted the proceedings and loudly defended his and other men's rights to indulge in such perversion. Lately NAMBLA has been in the news again because it is becoming bolder and open about its activities.

Romans 1:25 (NASB)

²⁵ For they **exchanged the truth of God for a lie**, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

That is the legacy of those who have **exchanged the truth of God for a lie**. Having suppressed God's truth in unrighteousness ([Romans 1:18](#)), rebellious man submits himself to untruth, **a lie**. The basic divine truth that fallen man suppresses is that of God's very existence and therefore His right and demand to be honored and glorified as sovereign Lord (see [vv. 19-21](#)).

Scripture often speaks of God as being the truth, as Jesus declared of Himself ([John 14:6](#)). **Isaiah** described a pagan who held an idol in his hand but was too spiritually blind to ask what should have been an obvious question: “...**Is there not a lie in my right hand?**” ([Isaiah 44:20](#)).

Isaiah 44:20 (NASB)

²⁰ “He feeds on ashes; a deceived heart has turned him aside. And he cannot deliver himself, nor say, “Is there not a lie in my right hand?”

Through Jeremiah, the Lord declared to apostate Judah, “...**You have forgotten Me and trusted in falsehood**” ([Jeremiah 13:25](#)).

Jeremiah 13:25 (NASB)

²⁵ “This is your lot, the portion measured to you From Me,” declares the LORD, “Because you have forgotten Me And trusted in falsehood.”

To forsake God is to forsake truth and become a slave to falsehood. To reject God, the Father of truth, is to become vulnerable to Satan, **the father of lies** ([John 8:44](#)).

John 8:44 (NASB)

⁴⁴ “You are of *your* father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own *nature*, for he is a liar and the father of lies.”

Tragically, as in the Corinthian church of Paul's day, many people who claim the name of Christ today have succumbed to the world's self-oriented view of morality. An advice columnist to singles received a letter asking how Christian singles can deal with their sexual desires and still uphold their Christian beliefs.

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“The columnist referred to a woman on her staff who conducts Christian singles retreats, who replied that such decisions were up to each couple to make for themselves. If having sex before marriage would harm their relationship or compromise their personal value systems, they should refrain, she said. Otherwise, sex in a loving relationship is all right without the sanction of marriage” (Joan Keeler, “The Single Experience,” *Glendale News-Press* [13 August 1981], p. 10).

Romans 1:25 (NASB)

²⁵ For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and **worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator**, who is blessed forever. Amen.”

When men turned from God and His truth, Paul goes on to say, they then **worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator**. As the apostle had just pointed out, they found themselves foolishly and wickedly worshiping lifeless images of their own making, “**in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures**” ([v. 23](#)).

Perhaps unable to continue discussing such vile things without “coming up for air,” as it were, Paul inserts a common Jewish doxology about the true God, the **Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen**. Paul could not resist adding that refreshing thought in the sea of filth he was describing. That word of praise to the Lord served, by utter contrast, to magnify the wickedness of idolatry and all other ungodliness.