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Series: The Book of Romans

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

(45)

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

(Continuation from 09/11/16)

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

**Romans 1:25 (NASB)**

<sup>25</sup> 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)**

<sup>20</sup> “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)**

<sup>25</sup> “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)**

<sup>44</sup> “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.”

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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.

“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)**

<sup>25</sup> 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.

**3. (Romans 1:26-27) Sin— Body— Judgment: God—the only living and true God—shows wrath by giving men up to vile, *unnatural* affections.**

**Romans 1:26-27 (NASB)**

<sup>26</sup> “For this reason **God gave them over to degrading passions**; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is **unnatural**,  
<sup>27</sup> and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”

The term “degrading passions” (*pathē atimias*) means “dishonor, disgrace, infamy, shame, and degradation”. It means passions that cannot be controlled or governed, that run loose and wild, no matter how much a person tries to control them.

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1. The reason God gives men up to “**degrading passions**” (*pathē atimias*) is because of their unnatural passion. Men lust and lust, craving the illegitimate and unlawful. They burn in their lust one for another.

**And note** what Scripture is talking about: *unnatural* affection, that is, homosexuality.

- a. Women burn and lust and exchange the “**natural use into that which is against nature.**” And note, it is *against nature*.
- b. Men burn in their “**lust one toward another; men with men doing that which is shameful.**”

**Note again** that the sin takes place in the heart. Men *burn within*, crave the sin before they commit the act. It is their burning, their lusting, and their craving that sets them aflame to pursue the shameful act. Their heart burns after other men, not after God. Therefore, they stand condemned, and God is forced to judge them.

**Romans 1:27 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup> “**And in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.**”

2. The result of *unnatural* affection is a totally depraved nature. When men choose a life of “**degrading passions**,” God gives them up to it. It is man’s choice, and since it is man’s choice, God can do nothing about it. God has to give man up to what he chooses. He does not override man’s will.

**Note a crucial fact:** Scripture says men receive “**receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.**” The judgment for homosexuality is *within*, not *without* man. If a person burns after *unnatural affection*, he is given over to his burning; he is given over to burn and crave more and more. He is judged and condemned to live in his *unnatural passion* and to feel the shame of it. He is enslaved and held in bondage to it, psychologically and physically.

And the judgment is “**due penalty**,” that is, fit, just, exactly what it should be. If men lust and burn after *unnatural affection*, it is only fit that they be given what they so passionately crave. Therefore, God judges men by giving men up to live in their “**degrading passions**”.

**1 Thessalonians 4:4-5 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> “**That each of you know how to possess his own vessel in sanctification and honor,**

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

**Hebrews 13:4 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> “**Marriage is to be held in honor among all, and the marriage bed is to be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.”**

## The Expression of Man's Sinfulness

### Romans 1:26-27 (NASB)

<sup>26</sup> “**For this reason** God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, <sup>27</sup> and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.”

**For this reason**, Paul declares—that is, because of man's rejecting the true God for false gods of his own making, for worshiping the creature rather than the Creator—**God gave them over to degrading passions**. For the second time (see [v. 24](#)) the apostle mentions God's abandonment of sinful mankind. He abandoned them not only to idolatry, the ultimate sexual expression of man's spiritual degeneracy, but also **to degrading passions**, which he identifies in these two verses as homosexuality, the ultimate expression of man's moral degeneracy.

To illustrate the **degrading passions** that rise out of the fallen human heart, Paul uses homosexuality, the most **degrading** and repulsive of all **passions**. In their freedom from God's truth men turned to perversion and even inversion of the created order. In the end their humanism resulted in the dehumanization of each of them. Perversion is the illicit and twisted expression of that which is God-given and natural. Homosexuality, on the other hand, is inversion, the expression of that which is neither God-given nor natural. When man forsakes the Author of nature, he inevitably forsakes the order of nature.

### Romans 1:26 (NASB)

<sup>26</sup> “**For this reason** God gave them over to degrading passions; for their **women** **exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural**.”

Some **women** of ancient times and throughout history have **exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural**. Paul does not use *gunē*, the usual term for **women**, but rather *thēleia*, which simply means female. In most cultures women have been more reluctant than men to become involved either in sexual promiscuity or homosexuality. Perhaps Paul mentions **women** first because their practice of homosexuality is especially shocking and dismaying.

In commenting on this verse, theologian Charles Hodge wrote, “Paul first refers to the degradation of females among the heathen, because they are always the last to be affected in the decay of morals, and their corruption is therefore proof that all virtue is lost” (*Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans* [Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1983 reprint], p. 42).

*Chrēsis* (function) was commonly used of sexual intercourse, and in this context the term could refer to nothing other than intimate sexual relations. Even most pagan societies have

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recognized the clearly obvious fact that homosexuality is abnormal and **unnatural**. It is also an abnormality that is unique to man.

**Romans 1:27 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup> “**And in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error.**”

**And in the same way also the men**, Paul says, again using a Greek term that simply denotes gender, in this case, males. The usual Greek terms for women and men, like corresponding terms in most languages, imply a certain dignity, and Paul refused to ascribe even an implied dignity to those who degenerate into homosexuality.

Those males, says Paul, **abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts**. There is a burning level of lust among homosexuals that beggars description and is rarely known among heterosexuals. The homosexuals of Sodom were so passionately consumed with their lust that they ignored the fact that they had been made blind and “...wearied themselves trying to find the doorway” into Lot’s house in order to pursue their vile passion (**Genesis 19:11**).

**Genesis 19:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup> “**They struck the men who were at the doorway of the house with blindness, both small and great, so that they wearied themselves trying to find the doorway.**”

Those ancient people were so morally perverse that in Scripture the name *Sodom* became a byword for immoral godlessness, and *sodomy*, a term derived from that name, became throughout history a synonym for homosexuality and other forms of sexual deviation.

In the United States and many other western countries, it is not uncommon for homosexual males to have 300 partners a year. Even when relationships are on a friendly basis, the most bizarre acts imaginable are committed, and mutilation is common.

In his biography (*Where Death Delights*, by Marshall Houts [New York: Coward-McCann, 1967]), the New York City forensic expert **Dr. Milton Helpern**, who makes no claim of being a Christian and avoids making moral judgments about homosexuality, nevertheless comments that, after having performed thousands of autopsies, he would warn anyone who chooses a homosexual lifestyle to be prepared for the consequences:

“When we see... brutal, multiple wound cases in a single victim... we just automatically assume that we’re dealing with a homosexual victim and a homosexual attacker.... I don’t know why it is so, but it seems that the violent explosions of jealousy among homosexuals far exceed those of the jealousy of a man for a woman, or a woman for a man. The pent-up charges and energy of the homosexual relationship simply cannot be contained. When the explosive point is reached, the

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result is brutally violent.... But this is the ‘normal’ pattern of these homosexual attacks, the multiple stabbings, the multiple senseless beatings that obviously must continue long after the victim dies” (pp. 269-70).

A San Francisco coroner estimated that ten percent of his city’s homicides were probably related to sado-masochistic sex among homosexuals (cf. **Bob Greene, “Society’s Been Given Far Too Much Rope,”** the *Chicago Tribune* [19 March 1981], sec. 2, p. 1).

Yet in spite of such impartial and damning evidence, many people, including a large number of psychologists and other social professionals, persist in maintaining there is no scientific proof that homosexuality is abnormal or harmful to society. Some even assert that attempts to convert homosexuals to heterosexuals are ethically questionable. The city government of San Francisco has even conducted workshops to teach homosexuals how to avoid serious bodily harm while engaging in sado-masochistic sex—although by definition, both sadism and masochism are destructive! The very purpose of both deviations is to inflict pain and harm, sadism on others and masochism on oneself. Many mass murderers seem to be homosexuals.

Unimaginably, many church denominations in the United States and elsewhere have ordained homosexuals to the ministry and even established special congregations for homosexuals. One denominational group claims that homosexuality is no more abnormal than left-handedness. An official church organization for homosexuals is called *Dignity*.

Instead of trying to help their children become free of sexual deviation, many parents of homosexuals have banded together to defend their children and to coerce society, government, and churches to recognize and accept homosexuality as normal. In many cases, religions that hold homosexuality to be a sin are blamed for the tragic results that homosexuals bring on themselves and on their families and friends. Evangelical Christianity in particular is often made the culprit and is accused of persecuting innocent people who cannot help being what they are.

But in both testaments God’s Word condemns homosexuality in the strongest of terms. Under the Old Covenant it was punishable by death. Paul declares unequivocally that, although homosexuality can be forgiven and cleansed just as any other sin, no unrepentant homosexual will enter heaven, just as will no unrepentant fornicator, idolater, adulterer, effeminate person, thief, covetous person, drunkard, reviler, or swindler ([1 Corinthians 6:9-11](#); cf. [Galatians 5:19-21](#); [Ephesians 5:3-5](#); [1 Timothy 1:9-10](#); [Jude 7](#)).

**[1 Corinthians 6:9-11 \(NASB\)](#)**

<sup>9</sup> “Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals,

<sup>10</sup> nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.

<sup>11</sup> 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.”

**Galatians 5:19-21 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup>“Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality,  
<sup>20</sup>idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions,  
<sup>21</sup>envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you, just as I have forewarned you, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.”

**Ephesians 5:3-5 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup>“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints;  
<sup>4</sup>and *there must be no* filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks.  
<sup>5</sup>For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God.”

**1 Timothy 1:9-10 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup>“Realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers  
<sup>10</sup>and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching.”

**Jude 1:7 (NASB)**

<sup>7</sup>“Just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.”

All people are born in sin, and individuals have varying tendencies and temptations toward certain sins. But no one is born a homosexual, any more than anyone is born a thief or a murderer. A person who becomes a habitual and unrepentant thief, murderer, adulterer, or homosexual does so of his own choice.

Any attempt at all to justify homosexuality is both futile and wicked, but to attempt to justify it on biblical grounds, as do many misguided church leaders, is even more futile and vile. To do that is to make God a liar and to love what He hates and justify what He condemns.

God so abhors homosexuality that He determined that the disgraceful, shameful acts that women commit with women and men commit with men would result in their **receiving in**

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**their own persons the due penalty of their error.** They would be judged by the self-destructiveness of their sin. The appalling physical consequences of homosexuality are visible evidence of God's righteous condemnation. Unnatural vice brings its own perverted reward. AIDS is frightening evidence of that fatal promise.