

09-04-16

Series: The Book of Romans

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

(43)

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

(Continuation from 08/28/16)

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

Abandoned by God ([Romans 1:24-32](#))

As Paul illustrates in these verses, and develops theologically through the end of **chapter 4**, man is not basically good but evil. His nature is innately bent toward sin.

[Romans 3:11 \(NASB\)](#)

¹¹ "THERE IS NONE WHO UNDERSTANDS, THERE IS NONE WHO SEEKS FOR GOD."

[Romans 3:12 \(NASB\)](#)

¹² "ALL HAVE TURNED ASIDE, TOGETHER THEY HAVE BECOME USELESS; THERE IS NONE WHO DOES GOOD, THERE IS NOT EVEN ONE."

[Romans 3:23 \(NASB\)](#)

²³ "For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God."

Those who ignore God's provision for dealing with sin and seek to improve themselves by their own power invariably commit the most heinous sin of all, which is self-righteousness and pride. Only God can graciously remove sin or produce righteousness, and the person who tries to eliminate his own guilt or achieve his own righteousness merely drives himself deeper into sin and further from God.

Like an untended garden, when man is left to himself the bad always chokes out the good, because that is the inclination of his fallen nature. Man has no capacity in himself to restrain the weeds of his sinfulness or to cultivate the good produce of righteousness. Man's natural development is not upward but downward; he does not evolve but devolve. He is not ascending to God but descending from God. He has continued a downward spiral of depravity throughout history; getting worse and worse, and when the restraints of the Holy Spirit are removed during the final Tribulation period, all hell will break loose on earth as evil reaches its ultimate stage (see [2 Thess. 2:3-9](#); [Rev. 9:1-11](#)).

[2 Thessalonians 2:3-9 \(NASB\)](#)

³ "Let no one in any way deceive you, for *it will not come* unless the apostasy comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed, the son of destruction,

⁴ who opposes and exalts himself above every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, displaying himself

as being God.

⁵ Do you not remember that while I was still with you, I was telling you these things?

⁶ And you know what restrains him now, so that in his time he will be revealed.

⁷ For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains *will do so* until he is taken out of the way.

⁸ Then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Lord will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming;

⁹ *that is*, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders.”

Revelation 9:1-11 (NASB)

¹ Then the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star from heaven which had fallen to the earth; and the key of the bottomless pit was given to him.

² He opened the bottomless pit, and smoke went up out of the pit, like the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by the smoke of the pit.

³ Then out of the smoke came locusts upon the earth, and power was given them, as the scorpions of the earth have power.

⁴ They were told not to hurt the grass of the earth, nor any green thing, nor any tree, but only the men who do not have the seal of God on their foreheads.

⁵ And they were not permitted to kill anyone, but to torment for five months; and their torment was like the torment of a scorpion when it stings a man.

⁶ And in those days men will seek death and will not find it; they will long to die, and death flees from them.

⁷ The appearance of the locusts was like horses prepared for battle; and on their heads appeared to be crowns like gold, and their faces were like the faces of men.

⁸ They had hair like the hair of women, and their teeth were like *the teeth* of lions.

⁹ They had breastplates like breastplates of iron; and the sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle.

¹⁰ They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months.

¹¹ They have as king over them, the angel of the abyss; his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek he has the name Apollyon.

Man cannot stop this slide because he is innately a slave to sin ([Romans 6:16-20](#)), and the more he pursues his deceiving efforts at self-reformation apart from God the more he becomes enslaved to sin, whose ultimate end is eternal death ([Romans 6:16-23](#)).

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As C. S. Lewis perceptively observes in his book *The Problem of Pain*, “[The lost] enjoy forever the horrible freedom they have demanded, and are therefore self-enslaved” ([New York: Macmillan, 1962], pp. 127-28).

The major point of [Romans 1:24-32](#) is that when men persistently abandon God, God will abandon them (see [vv. 24, 26, 28](#)).

[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.”

[Romans 1:26 \(NASB\)](#)

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

[Romans 1:28 \(NASB\)](#)

²⁸“And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, **God gave them over** to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.”

Even when God’s own people ignore and disobey Him, He may temporarily abandon them. “**But My people did not listen to My voice,**” the psalmist wrote in behalf of the Lord, “**and Israel did not obey Me. So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, to walk in their own devices**” ([Psalm 81:11-12 NASB](#)).

Hosea reports the same tragic reality concerning the unfaithfulness of the northern kingdom, represented by Ephraim, to whom God said: “**Ephraim is joined to idols; let him alone**” ([Hosea 4:17 NASB](#)).

In his message to the high priest and other religious leaders in Jerusalem, Stephen reminded them that when the ancient Israelites rejected the Lord and erected and worshiped the golden calf while Moses was on Mount Sinai, “⁴²**God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven,**” that is, the demon-inspired deities they had made ([Acts 7:38-42 NASB](#)).

[Acts 7:38-42 \(NASB\)](#)

³⁸“This is the one who was in the congregation in the wilderness together with the angel who was speaking to him on Mount Sinai, and *who was* with our fathers; and he received living oracles to pass on to you.

³⁹Our fathers were unwilling to be obedient to him, but repudiated him and in their hearts turned back to Egypt,

⁴⁰SAYING TO AARON, ‘MAKE FOR US GODS WHO WILL GO BEFORE US; FOR THIS MOSES WHO LED US OUT OF THE LAND OF EGYPT—WE DO NOT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO HIM.’

⁴¹At that time they made a calf and brought a sacrifice to the idol, and were rejoicing in the works of their hands.

⁴²But God turned away and delivered them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, ‘IT WAS NOT TO ME THAT YOU OFFERED VICTIMS AND SACRIFICES FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, WAS IT, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL?’”

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Paul declared to a pagan crowd in Lystra, **“In the generations gone by He [God] permitted all the nations to go their own ways”** ([Acts 14:16 NASB](#)).

When God abandons men to their own devices, His divine protection is partially withdrawn. When that occurs, men not only become more vulnerable to the destructive wiles of Satan but also suffer the destruction that their own sin works in and through them. **“You have forsaken Me and served other gods,”** the Lord said to Israel; **“Therefore I will no longer deliver you”** ([Judges 10:13 NASB](#)).

When God’s Spirit came upon Azariah, He told Judah, **“...The Lord is with you when you are with Him. And if you seek Him He will let you find Him; but if you forsake Him, He will forsake you”** ([2 Chronicles 15:2](#)).

Through **“...Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada the priest,”** God again said to Judah, **“...Why do you transgress the commandments of the Lord and do not prosper? Because you have forsaken the Lord, He has also forsaken you”** ([2 Chronicles 24:20](#)).

[Romans 1:24-32](#) vividly portrays the consequences of God’s abandonment of rebellious mankind, showing **the essence** ([vv. 24-25](#)), **the expression** ([vv. 26-27](#)), and **the extent** ([vv. 28-32](#)) of man’s sinfulness. Each of those progressively more sobering sections is introduced with the declaration **“God gave them over.”**

It is inherent in the nature of man that his will must be free. Made in the image of God who is completely free, man must enjoy a measure of freedom. This enables him to select his companions for this world and the next; it enables him to yield his soul to whom he will, to give allegiance to God or the devil, to remain a sinner or become a saint.

God will take nine steps toward us, but He will not take the tenth. He will *incline* us to repent, but He cannot do our repenting for us. It is of the essence of repentance that it can only be done by the one who committed the act to be repented of. God can wait on the sinning man; He can withhold judgment; He can exercise long-suffering to the point where He appears **“lax”** in His judicial administration; but He cannot force a man to repent. To do this would be to violate the man’s freedom and void the gift God originally bestowed upon him.

The true saint is one who acknowledges that he possesses from God the gift of freedom. He knows that he will never be cudgled into obedience nor wheedled like a petulant child into doing the will of God; he knows that these methods are unworthy both of God and of his own soul. He knows he is free to make any choice he will, and with that knowledge he chooses forever the blessed will of God.

(Romans 1:24-32) Introduction— God’s Wrath— Judgment: Scripture says “the wrath of God is revealed from heaven” ([Romans 1:18](#)).

Romans 1:24-32 (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.

²⁶ For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural,

²⁷ 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.

²⁸ And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper,

²⁹ being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips,

³⁰ slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents,

³¹ without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful;

³² and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.”

This particular passage discusses the **four ways** that God reveals and shows His wrath.

Note three things.

1. All four ways concern judgments that come upon man. That is, the wrath of God is exercised and falls upon man because of his ungodliness and unrighteousness.

2. All four ways have to do with history, with human experience, with a moral universe.

That is, God’s wrath is revealed from heaven day by day.....

1. throughout history.
2. in man’s experience.
3. within a moral universe.

3. Three of the judgments are present judgments; they take place today in the lives of men ([Romans 1:24-31](#)). The fourth judgment is future and is to be the final judgment upon men ([Romans 1:32](#)).

How does God reveal and execute His wrath upon man?

1. God gave men up to do as they willed (v.24).
2. God gave men up to uncleanness (v.24-25).
3. God gave men up to vile, unnatural affections (v.26-27).
4. God gave men up to reprobate, depraved minds (v.28-31).
5. God assures final judgment: death (v.32).

1. (Romans 1:24) Judgment— Man, Abandoned by God: God—the only living and true God—gave men up to do as they willed.

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.”

This is said three times in this passage, and each time was due to a serious sin of man ([Romans 1:24](#), [26](#), [28](#)).

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.”

Romans 1:26 (NASB)

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

Romans 1:28 (NASB)

²⁸“And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, **God gave them over** to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper.”

Man’s sin forced God to give man up and to abandon him. The scene was terrible and frightening, for to be abandoned and left without God in this world leads to the worst possible life imaginable.

There are **two strong reasons** why God gives man up, and each issues a loud warning to man.

1. Man chooses sin over God, and when he does, **two things happen**.
 - a. Man becomes enslaved to sin. Sin actually stirs more and more sin. The more a man sins the easier it is for him to sin again. At first he may ponder the wisdom of committing the sin; but later on, after committing the sin over and over, he seldom if ever gives the sin a second thought.

Sin looks good, tastes good, and feels good. It is attractive and it satisfies the human flesh and urges of man. It satisfies so much that man is naturally attracted to it. By sinning, he steadily makes himself a slave to sin. He becomes addicted. Sin becomes the terrible master and subjects man to its cruel habits and enticements that are almost impossible to break.

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b. Sin *always* lies. This needs to be remembered. Sin entices, claiming to bring pleasure and stimulation and happiness, **but in reality it destroys a person's.....**

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|------------|---------------|-----------|
| 1. body | 5. life | 9. future |
| 2. values | 6. hope | 10. will |
| 3. mind | 7. profession | 11. soul |
| 4. friends | 8. family | |

A terrible tragedy that is so often forgotten is this: we are not islands unto ourselves. Our sin involves others; therefore, our sin destroys others—both their lives and their souls. Sin may look, taste, and feel good to us; **but it always involves and influences others.** It hurts and dooms our children, spouses, friends and society.

2. Man abandons God, actually turns away from God and gives God up. This may be called *spiritual abandonment*: man *spiritually abandons* God. God has given man a free will, and if a man wills to turn away from God, he can. God cannot interfere with that choice. To do so would be to take away man's freedom.

So God appeals to man spiritually, through mercy and love and grace, but He does not violate man's choice. He cannot. To do so would be to have a coerced and mechanical universe. Man would become nothing but a robot, coerced to do this and that and to do it exactly as God wills.

The result would be tragic: man would never experience love, goodness, care, concern, or feelings. Love is not love if it is coerced. It is mechanical and meaningless. The expression of any affection or virtue is meaningless unless it is freely given. Therefore, when man turns away from God, he himself makes the choice to do so, and God *cannot* interfere. The choice is man's, and man is abandoned—left all alone to himself to do exactly as he has chosen ([Hosea 4:17](#); [Ephes. 4:19](#)).

[Hosea 4:17 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁷“Ephraim **is joined to** idols; Let him alone.”

[Ephesians 4:19 \(NASB\)](#)

¹⁹“**And they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness.**”

Therefore, God has no choice.

He must.....

- give man up.
- let man go his own way.
- spiritually abandon man.
- leave man to live for that which he has chosen.

[Psalm 81:12 \(NASB\)](#)

¹²“**So I gave them over to the stubbornness of their heart, To walk in their own devices.**”

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Acts 7:42 (NASB)

⁴²“But God turned away and **delivered them up to** serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, ‘IT WAS NOT TO ME THAT YOU OFFERED VICTIMS AND SACRIFICES FORTY YEARS IN THE WILDERNESS, WAS IT, O HOUSE OF ISRAEL?’”